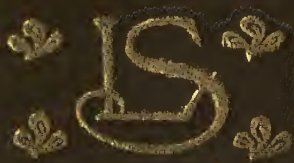


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THE WORKS OF LAURENCE STERNE

EDITED BY

GEORGE SAINTSBURY

IN SIX VOLUMES

VOL. VI.

MISCELLANEOUS WORKS

VOL. II.




Lydia Sterne de Medalle.

THE LETTERS
SERMONS and
MISCELLANEOUS
WRITINGS of
LAURENCE STERNE

Edited by GEORGE SAINTSBURY
with
Illustrations by E. J. WHEELER

In two Volumes.
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LETTERS.

Letter lxxxvi.

To Eliza.

MY DEAREST ELIZA!

I BEGAN a new journal this morning; you shall see it; for if I live not till your return to England, I will leave it you as a legacy. 'Tis a sorrowful page; but I will write cheerful ones; and could I write letters to thee, they should be cheerful ones too: but few, I fear, will reach thee! However, depend upon receiving something of the kind by every post; till then, thou wavest thy hand, and bid'st me write no more.

Tell me how you are; and what sort of fortitude Heaven inspires you with. How are you accommodated, my dear? Is all right? Scribble away, any thing, and every thing to me. Depend upon seeing me at Deal, with the James's, should you be detained there by contrary winds.—Indeed, Eliza, I should with pleasure fly to you, could I be the means of rendering you any service, or doing you kindness. Gracious and merciful God! consider the anguish of a poor girl.—Strengthen and preserve her in all the

shocks her frame must be exposed to. She is now without a protector, but thee! Save her from all accidents of a dangerous element, and give her comfort at the last.

My prayer, Eliza, I hope, is heard; for the sky seems to smile upon me, as I look up to it. I am just returned from our dear Mrs James's, where I have been talking of thee for three hours.—She has got your picture, and likes it: but Marriot, and some other judges, agree that mine is the better, and expressive of a sweeter character. But what is that to the original? yet I acknowledge that hers is a picture for the world, and mine is calculated only to please a very sincere friend, or sentimental philosopher.—In the one, you are dressed in smiles, and with all the advantages of silks, pearls, and ermine;—in the other, simple as a vestal—appearing the good girl nature made you;—which, to me, conveys an idea of more unaffected sweetness, than Mrs Draper, habited for conquest, in a birth-day suit, with her countenance animated, and her dimples visible.—If I remember right, Eliza, you endeavoured to collect every charm of your person into your face, with more than *common* care, the day you sat for Mrs James—Your colour, too, brightened; and your eyes shone with more than usual brilliancy. I then requested you to come simple and unadorned when you sat for me—knowing (as I see with *unprejudiced* eyes) that you could receive no addition from the silk-worm's aid, or jeweller's polish. Let me now tell you a truth, which, I believe, I have uttered before.—When I first saw you, I beheld you as an object of compassion, and as a very plain woman. The mode of your dress (tho' fashionable) disfigured you.—But nothing now could render you such, but the being solicitous to make yourself admired as a handsome one.—You are not handsome, Eliza, nor is yours a

face that will please the tenth part of your beholders, —but are something more; for I scruple not to tell you, I never saw so intelligent, so animated, so good a countenance; nor was there (nor ever will be) that man of sense, tenderness, and feeling, in your company three hours, that was not (or will not be) your admirer, or friend, in consequence of it; that is, if you assume, or assumed, no character foreign to your own, but appeared the artless being nature designed you for. A something in your eyes, and voice, you possess in a degree more persuasive than any woman I ever saw, read, or heard of. But it is that bewitching sort of nameless excellence, that men of nice sensibility alone can be touched with.

Were your husband in England, I would freely give him five hundred pounds (if money could purchase the acquisition), to let you only sit by me two hours in a day, while I wrote my *Sentimental Journey*. I am sure the work would sell so much the better for it, that I should be reimbursed the sum more than seven times told.—I would not give nine pence for the picture of you the Newnhams have got executed—It is the resemblance of a conceited, made-up coquette. Your eyes, and the shape of your face (the latter the most perfect oval I ever saw), which are perfections that must strike the most indifferent judge, because they are equal to any of God's works in a similar way, and finer than any I beheld in all my travels, are manifestly injured by the affected leer of the one, and strange appearance of the other; owing to the attitude of the head, which is a proof of the artist's, or your friend's false taste. The *****s, who verify the character I once gave of teasing, or sticking like pitch, or birdlime, sent a card that they would wait on Mrs ***** on Friday.—She sent back, she was engaged.—Then to meet at Ranelagh, to-night.—She answered, she did

not go.—She says, if she allows the least footing, she never shall get rid of the acquaintance; which she is resolved to drop at once. She knows them. She knows they are not her friends, nor yours; and the first use they would make of being with her, would be to sacrifice you to her (if they could) a second time. Let her not then; let her not, my dear, be a greater friend to thee, than thou art to thyself. She begs I will reiterate my request to you, that you will not write to them. It will give her, and thy Bramin, inexpressible pain. Be assured, all this is not without reason on her side. I have my reasons too; the first of which is, that I should grieve to excess, if Eliza wanted that fortitude her Yorick has built so high upon. I said I never more would mention the name to thee; and had I not received it, as a kind of charge, from a dear woman that loves you, I should not have broke my word. I will write again to-morrow to thee, thou best and most endearing of girls! A peaceful night to thee. My spirit will be with thee through every watch of it.

Adieu.

Letter lxxvii.

To the same.

I THINK you could act no otherwise than you did with the young soldier. There was no shutting the door against him, either in politeness or humanity. Thou tellest me he seems susceptible of tender impressions: and that before Miss Light has sailed a fortnight, he will be in love with her.—Now I think it a thousand times more likely that he attaches himself to thee, Eliza; because thou art a thousand times more amiable.

Five months with Eliza ; and in the same room ; and an amorous son of Mars besides !—“ *It can no be, masser.*” The sun, if he could avoid it, would not shine upon a dunghill ; but his rays are so pure, Eliza, and celestial,—I never heard that they were polluted by it.—Just such will thine be, dearest child, in this, and every such situation you will be exposed to, till thou art fixed for life.—But thy discretion, thy wisdom, thy honour, the spirit of thy Yorick, and thy own spirit, which is equal to it, will be thy ablest counsellors.

Surely, by this time, something is doing for thy accommodation.—But why may not clean washing and rubbing do instead of painting your cabin, as it is to be hung ? Paint is so pernicious, both to your nerves and lungs, and will keep you so much longer too, out of your apartment ; where, I hope, you will pass some of your happiest hours.—

I fear the best of your shipmates are only genteel by comparison with the contrasted crew, with which thou must behold them. So was—you know who !—from the same fallacy that was put upon the judgment, when—but I will not mortify you. If they are decent, and distant, it is enough ; and as much as is to be expected. If any of them are more, I rejoice ;—thou wilt want every aid ; and 'tis thy due to have them. Be cautious only, my dear, of intimacies. Good hearts are open and fall naturally into them. Heaven inspire thine with fortitude, in this, and every deadly trial. Best of God's works, farewell ! Love me, I beseech thee ; and remember me for ever !

I am, my Eliza, and will ever be, in the most comprehensive sense,

Thy friend,
YORICK.

P.S.—Probably you will have an opportunity of writing to me by some Dutch or French ship, or from the Cape de Verd Islands—it will reach me somehow.—

Letter lxxxviii.

To the same.

MY DEAR ELIZA!

OH! I grieve for your cabin.—And the fresh painting will be enough to destroy every nerve about thee. Nothing so pernicious as white lead. Take care of yourself, dear girl; and sleep not in it too soon. It will be enough to give you a stroke of an epilepsy. I hope you will have left the ship; and that my Letters may meet, and greet you, as you get out of your post-chaise, at Deal.—When you have got them all, put them, my dear, into some order.—The first eight or nine are numbered: but I wrote the rest without that direction to thee; but thou wilt find them out, by the day or hour, which, I hope, I have generally prefixed to them. When they are got together, in chronological order, sew them together under a cover. I trust they will be a perpetual refuge to thee, from time to time; and that thou wilt (when weary of fools, and uninteresting discourse) retire, and converse an hour with them, and me.

I have not had power, or the heart, to aim at enlivening any one of them, with a single stroke of wit or humour; but they contain something better; and what you will feel more suited to your situation—a long detail of much advice, truth, and knowledge. I hope, too, you will perceive loose touches of an honest

heart, in every one of them ; which speaks more than the most studied periods ; and will give thee more ground of trust and reliance upon Yorick, than all that laboured eloquence could supply. Lean then thy whole weight, Eliza, upon them and upon me. "May poverty, distress, anguish, and shame, be my portion, if ever I give thee reason to repent the knowledge of me !"——With this asseveration, made in the presence of a just God, I pray to him, that so it may speed with me, as I deal candidly, and honourably with thee ! I would not mislead thee, Eliza ; I would not injure thee, in the opinion of a single individual, for the richest crown the proudest monarch wears.

Remember, that while I have life and power, whatever is mine, you may style, and think, yours.—Though sorry should I be, if ever my friendship was put to the test thus, for your own delicacy's sake.—Money and counters are of equal use, in my opinion ; they both serve to set up with.

I hope you will answer me this letter ; but if thou art debarred by the elements, which hurry thee away, I will write one for thee ; and knowing it is such a one as thou would'st have written, I will regard it as my Eliza's.

Honour, and happiness, and health, and comforts of every kind, sail along with thee, thou most worthy of girls ! I will live for thee, and my Lydia—be rich for the dear children of my heart—gain wisdom, gain fame, and happiness, to share with them—with thee—and her, in my old age.—Once for all, adieu.—Preserve thy life ; steadily pursue the ends we proposed ; and let nothing rob thee of those powers Heaven has given thee for thy well-being.

What can I add more, in the agitation of mind I am in, and within five minutes of the last postman's bell, but recommend thee to Heaven, and recommend

myself to Heaven with thee, in the same fervent ejaculation, "that we may be happy, and meet again; if not in this world, in the next."—Adieu,—I am thine, Eliza, affectionately, and everlastingly,

YORICK.

Letter lxxxix.

To the same.

I WISH to God, Eliza, it was possible to postpone the voyage to India, for another year.—For I am firmly persuaded within my own heart, that thy husband could never limit thee with regard to time.

I fear that Mr B—— has exaggerated matters.—I like not his countenance. It is absolutely killing.—Should evil befall thee, what will he not have to answer for? I know not the being that will be deserving of so much pity, or that I shall hate more. He will be an outcast, alien—In which case I will be a father to thy children, my good girl!—therefore take no thought about them.—

But, Eliza, if thou art so very ill, still put off all thoughts of returning to India this year.—Write to your husband—tell him the truth of your case.—If he is the generous, humane man you describe him to be, he cannot but applaud your conduct.—I am credibly informed, that his repugnance to your living in England arises only from the dread, which has entered his brain, that thou mayest run him in debt, beyond thy appointments, and that he must discharge them—that such a creature should be sacrificed for the paltry consideration of a few hundreds, is too, too hard! Oh! my child! that I could, with propriety, indemnify

him for every charge, even to the last mite, that thou hast been of to him! With joy would I give him my whole subsistence—nay, sequester my livings, and trust the treasures Heaven has furnished my head with, for a future subsistence.—

You owe much, I allow, to your husband,—you owe something to appearances, and the opinion of the world; but, trust me, my dear, you owe much likewise to yourself.—Return, therefore, from Deal, if you continue ill.—I will prescribe for you, gratis.—You are not the first woman, by many, I have done so for, with success. I will send for my wife and daughter, and they shall carry you in pursuit of health, to Montpellier, the wells of Bançois, the Spa, or whither thou wilt. Thou shalt direct them, and make parties of pleasure in what corner of the world fancy points out to thee. We shall fish upon the banks of Arno, and lose ourselves in the sweet labyrinths of its vallies.—And then thou should'st warble to us, as I have once or twice heard thee,—“I'm lost, I'm lost”—but we should find thee again, my Eliza.—Of a similar nature to this, was your physician's prescription: “Use gentle exercise, the pure southern air of France, or milder Naples—with the society of friendly, gentle beings.” Sensible man! He certainly entered into your feelings. He knew the fallacy of medicine to a creature, whose ILLNESS HAS ARISEN FROM THE AFFLICTION OF HER MIND. Time only, my dear, I fear you must trust to, and have your reliance on; may it give you the health so enthusiastic a votary to the charming goddess deserves!

I honour you, Eliza, for keeping secret some things, which, if explained, had been a panegyric on yourself. There is a dignity in venerable affliction which will not allow it to appeal to the world for pity or redress. Well have you supported that character, my amiable,

philosophic friend! And, indeed, I begin to think you have as many virtues as my uncle Toby's widow.—I don't mean to insinuate, hussey, that *my* opinion is no better founded than his was of Mrs Wadman; nor do I conceive it possible for any *Trim* to convince me it is equally fallacious.—I am sure, while I have my reason, it is not.—Talking of widows—pray, Eliza, if ever you are such, do not think of giving yourself to some wealthy nabob—because I design to marry you myself.—My wife cannot live long—she has sold all the provinces in France already—and I know not the woman I should like so well for her substitute as yourself.—'Tis true, I am ninety-five in constitution, and you but twenty-five—rather too great a disparity this!—but what I want in youth, I will make up in wit and good humour.—Not Swift so loved his Stella, Scarron his Maintenon, or Waller his Sacharissa, as I will love and sing thee, my wife elect! All those names, eminent as they were, shall give place to thine, Eliza. Tell me, in answer to this, that you approve and honour the proposal, and that you would (like the Spectator's mistress) have more joy in putting on an old man's slipper, than associating with the gay, the voluptuous, and the young.—Adieu, my Simplicitia!

Yours,

TRISTRAM.

Letter xx.

To the same.

MY DEAR ELIZA!

I HAVE been within the verge of the gates of death.—I was ill the last time I wrote to you, and apprehensive of what would be the consequence.—My fears were but

too well founded ; for, in ten minutes after I dispatched my letter, this poor, fine-spun frame of Yorick's gave way, and I broke a vessel in my breast, and could not stop the loss of blood till four this morning. I have filled all thy India handkerchiefs with it.—It came, I think, from my heart ! I fell asleep through weakness. At six I awoke, with the bosom of my shirt steeped in tears. I dreamt I was sitting under the canopy of Indolence, and that thou camest into the room, with a shawl in thy hand, and told me, my spirit had flown to thee in the Downs, with tidings of my fate ; and that you were come to administer what consolation filial affection could bestow, and to receive my parting breath and blessing.—With that you folded the shawl about my waist, and, kneeling, supplicated my attention. I awoke ; but in what a frame ! O my God ! “ But thou wilt number my tears and put them all into thy bottle.” —Dear girl ! I see thee,—thou art for ever present to my fancy,—embracing my feeble knees, and raising thy fine eyes to bid me be of comfort : and when I talk to Lydia, the words of Esau, as uttered by thee, perpetually ring in my ears—“ Bless *me* even also, my father ! ” —Blessing attend thee, thou child of my heart !

My bleeding is quite stopped, and I feel the principle of life strong within me ; so be not alarmed, Eliza—I know I shall do well. I have eat my breakfast with hunger ; and I write to thee with a pleasure arising from that prophetic impression in my imagination, that “all will terminate to our heart's content.” Comfort thyself eternally with this persuasion, “that the best of beings (as thou hast sweetly expressed it) could not, by a combination of accidents, produce such a chain of events, merely to be the source of misery to the leading person engaged in them.” The observation was very applicable, very good, and very elegantly expressed. I wish my

memory did justice to the wording of it.—Who taught you the art of writing so sweetly, Eliza?—You have absolutely exalted it to a science!—When I am in want of ready cash, and ill health will not permit my genius to exert itself, I shall print your letters, as finished essays, “by an unfortunate Indian lady.” The style is new; and would almost be a sufficient recommendation for their selling well, without merit—but their sense, natural ease, and spirit, is not to be equalled, I believe in this section of the globe; nor, I will answer for it, by any of your country-women in yours.—I have shewn your letter to Mrs B—, and to half the literati in town.—You shall not be angry with me for it, because I meant to do you honour by it.—You cannot imagine how many admirers your epistolary productions have gained you, that never viewed your external merits. I only wonder where thou could'st acquire thy graces, thy goodness, thy accomplishments—so connected! so educated! Nature has surely studied to make thee her peculiar care—for thou art (and not in my eyes alone) the best and fairest of all her works.—

And so this is the last letter thou art to receive from me; because the Earl of Chatham* (I read in the papers) is got to the Downs; and the wind, I find, is fair. If so—blessed woman! take my last, last farewell!—Cherish the remembrance of me; think how I esteem, nay how affectionately I love thee, and what a price I set upon thee! Adieu, adieu! and with my adieu—let me give thee one straight rule of conduct, that thou hast heard from my lips in a thousand forms—but I concenter it in one word,

REVERENCE THYSELF.

* By the Newspapers of the times it appears that the *Earl of Chatham* East-Indiaman sailed from Deal, April 3, 1767.

Adieu, once more, Eliza! May no anguish of heart plant a wrinkle upon thy face, till I behold it again! May no doubt or misgivings disturb the serenity of thy mind, or awaken a painful thought about thy children—for they are Yorick's—and Yorick is thy friend for ever!—Adieu, adieu, adieu!

P.S.—Remember, that Hope shortens all journies, by sweetening them—so sing my little stanza on the subject, with the devotion of an hymn, every morning when thou arisest, and thou wilt eat thy breakfast with more comfort for it.

Blessings, rest, and Hygeia go with thee! May'st thou soon return, in peace and affluence, to illume my night! I am, and shall be, the last to deplore thy loss, and will be the first to congratulate and hail thy return.—

FARE THEE WELL!

Letter xci.

To Miss Sterne.

Bond-street, April 9, 1767.

THIS letter, my dear Lydia, will distress thy good heart, for from the beginning thou wilt perceive no entertaining strokes of humour in it—I cannot be cheerful when a thousand melancholy ideas surround me—I have met with a loss of near fifty pounds, which I was taken in for in an extraordinary manner—but what is that loss in comparison of one I may experience?—Friendship is the balm and cordial of life, and without it, 'tis a heavy load not worth sustaining.—I am unhappy—thy mother and thyself at a distance from me, and what can compensate for such a destitution?

—For God's sake, persuade her to come and fix in England, for life is too short to waste in separation—and whilst she lives in one country, and I in another, many people will suppose it proceeds from choice—besides, I want thee near me, thou child and darling of my heart!—I am in a melancholy mood, and my Lydia's eyes will smart with weeping, when I tell her the cause that now affects me.—I am apprehensive the dear friend I mentioned in my last letter is going into a decline—I was with her two days ago, and I never beheld a being so altered—she has a tender frame, and looks like a drooping lily, for the roses are fled from her cheeks—I can never see or talk to this incomparable woman without bursting into tears—I have a thousand obligations to her, and I owe her more than her whole sex, if not all the world put together—She has a delicacy in her way of thinking that few possess—our conversations are of the most interesting nature, and she talks to me of quitting this world with more composure than others think of living in it.—I have wrote an epitaph, of which I send thee a copy—'Tis expressive of her modest worth—but may Heaven restore her! and may she live to write mine!

Columns and labour'd urns but vainly shew
 An idle scene of decorated woe.
 The sweet companion, and the friend sincere,
 Need no mechanic help to force the tear.
 In heart-felt numbers, never meant to shine,
 'Twill flow eternal o'er a hearse like thine.
 'Twill flow whilst gentle goodness has one friend,
 Or kindred tempers have a tear to lend.

Say all that is kind of me to thy mother, and believe me, my Lydia, that I love thee most truly—So adieu—I am what I ever was, and hope ever shall be,

Thy affectionate Father,

L. S.

As to Mr —, by your description he is a fat fool. I beg you will not give up your time to such a being—Send me some *batons pour les dents*—there are none good here.

Letter xcij.

To Lady P.

Mount Coffee-house, Tuesday, 3 o'clock.

THERE is a strange mechanical effect produced in writing a billet-doux within a stone-cast of the lady who engrosses the heart and soul of an inamorato—for this cause (but mostly because I am to dine in this neighbourhood) have I, Tristram Shandy, come forth from my lodgings to a coffee-house the nearest I could find to my dear Lady ——'s house, and have called for a sheet of gilt paper, to try the truth of this article of my creed—Now for it—

O my dear lady, what a dishclout of a soul hast thou made of me!—I think, by the bye, this is a little too familiar an introduction for so unfamiliar a situation as I stand in with you—where Heaven knows, I am kept at a distance—and despair of getting one inch nearer you, with all the steps and windings I can think of to recommend myself to you—Would not any man in his senses run diametrically from you—and as far as his legs would carry him, rather than thus causelessly, foolishly, and fool-hardily expose himself afresh—and afresh, where his heart and his reason tells him he shall be sure to come off loser, if not totally undone?—Why would you tell me you would be glad to see me?—Does it give you pleasure to make me more unhappy—or does it add to your

triumph, that your eyes and lips have turned a man into a fool, whom the rest of the town is courting as a wit?—I am a fool—the weakest, the most ductile, the most tender fool, that ever woman tried the weakness of—and the most unsettled in my purposes and resolutions of recovering my right mind.—It is but an hour ago, that I kneeled down and swore I never would come near you—and after saying my Lord's Prayer for the sake of the close, *of not being led into temptation*—out I sallied like any Christian hero, ready to take the field against the world, the flesh, and the devil; not doubting but I should finally trample them all down under my feet—and now am I got so near you—within this vile stone's cast of your house—I feel myself drawn into a vortex, that has turned my brain upside downwards, and though I had purchased a box ticket to carry me to Miss *****'s benefit, yet I know very well, that was a single line directed to me, to let me know Lady ——— would be alone at seven, and suffer me to spend the evening with her, she would infallibly see every thing verified I have told her.—I dine at Mr C——r's in Wigmore-street, in this neighbourhood, where I shall stay till seven, in hopes you purpose to put me to this proof. If I hear nothing by that time, I shall conclude you are better disposed of—and shall take a sorry hack, and sorrily jog on to the play—Curse on the word. I know nothing but sorrow—except this one thing, that I love you (perhaps foolishly, but)

most sincerely.

L. STERNE.

Letter xciiij.

To Mr and Mrs J.

Old Bond-street, April 21, 1767.

I AM sincerely affected, my dear Mr and Mrs J——, by your friendly enquiry, and the interest you are so good to take in my health. God knows I am not able to give a good account of myself, having passed a bad night in much feverish agitation.—My physician ordered me to bed, and to keep therein till some favourable change—I fell ill the moment I got to my lodgings—he says it is owing to my taking James's Powder, and venturing out on so cold a day as Sunday—but he is mistaken, for I am certain whatever bears the name must have efficacy with me—I was bled yesterday, and again to-day, and have been almost dead; but this friendly enquiry from Gerrard-street has poured balm into what blood I have left—I hope still, and (next to the sense of what I owe my friends) it shall be the last pleasurable sensation I will part with—if I continue mending, it will yet be some time before I shall have strength enough to get out in a carriage—my first visit will be a visit of true gratitude—I leave my kind friends to guess where—a thousand blessings go along with this, and may Heaven preserve you both—Adieu, my dear Sir, and dear lady.

I am your ever obliged
L. STERNE.



Letter xiv.

To Ignatius Sancho.

Bond-street, Saturday [April 25, 1767].

I was very sorry, my good Sancho, that I was not at home to return my compliments by you for the great courtesy of the Duke of M—g—'s family to me, in honouring my list of subscribers with their names—for which I bear them all thanks.—But you have something to add, Sancho, to what I owe your good will also on this account, and that is, to send me the subscription money, which I find a necessity of dunning my best friends for before I leave town—to avoid the perplexities of both keeping pecuniary accounts (for which I have very slender talents), and collecting them (for which I have neither strength of body or mind); and so, good Sancho, dun the Duke of M., the Duchess of M., and Lord M. for their subscriptions, and lay the sin, and money with it too, at my door—I wish so good a family every blessing they merit, along with my humblest compliments. You know, Sancho, that I am your friend and well-wisher,

L. STERNE.

P.S.—I leave town on Friday morning—and should on Thursday, but that I stay to dine with Lord and Lady S——.

Letter xv.

To the Earl of S——.

MY LORD, Old Bond-street, May 1, 1767.

I WAS yesterday taking leave of all the town, with an intention of leaving it this day, but I am detained by

the kindness of Lord and Lady S——, who have made a party to dine and sup on my account—I am impatient to set out for my solitude, for there the mind gains strength, and learns to lean upon herself—In the world it seeks or accepts of a few treacherous supports—the feigned compassion of one—the flattery of a second—the civilities of a third—the friendship of a fourth—they all deceive, and bring the mind back to where mine is retreating, to retirement, reflection, and books. My departure is fixed for to-morrow morning, but I could not think of quitting a place where I have received such numberless and unmerited civilities from your lordship, without returning my most grateful thanks, as well as my hearty acknowledgments for your friendly enquiry from Bath. Illness, my Lord, has occasioned my silence—Death knocked at my door, but I would not admit him—the call was both unexpected and unpleasant—and I am seriously worn down to a shadow—and still very weak;—but weak as I am, I have as whimsical a story to tell you as ever befel one of my family—Shandy's nose, his name, his sash window are fools to it—it will serve at least to amuse you—The injury I did myself last month in catching cold upon James's Powder—fell, you must know, upon the worst part it could—the most painful, and most dangerous of any in the human body. It was on this crisis I called in an able surgeon and with him an able physician (both my friends) to inspect my disaster—'Tis a venereal case, cried my two scientific friends—'Tis impossible, however, to be that, replied I—for I have had no commerce whatever with the sex, not even with my wife, added I, these fifteen years.—You are, however, my good friend, said the surgeon, or there is no such case in the world—What the devil, said I, without knowing women?—We will not reason about it, said the

physician, but you must undergo a course of mercury—I will lose my life first, said I—and trust to nature, to time, or at the worst to death—So I put an end, with some indignation, to the conference—and determined to bear all the torments I underwent, and ten times more, rather than submit to be treated like a *sinner*, in a point where I had acted like a *saint*.—Now as the father of mischief would have it, who has no pleasure like that of dishonouring the righteous, it so fell out that from the moment I dismissed my doctors, my pains began to rage with a violence not to be expressed, or supported. Every hour became more intolerable.—I was got to bed, cried out, and raved the whole night, and was got up so near dead, that my friends insisted upon my sending again for my physician and surgeon. I told them upon the word of a man of honour they were both mistaken, as to my case—but though they had reasoned wrong, they might act right; but that sharp as my sufferings were, I felt them not so sharp as the imputation which a venereal treatment of my case laid me under—They answered, that these taints of the blood laid dormant twenty years; but they would not reason with me in a point wherein I was so delicate, but would do all the office for which they were called in, namely to put an end to my torment, which otherwise would put an end to me—and so I have been compelled to surrender myself—and thus, my dear Lord, has your poor friend with all his sensibilities been suffering the chastisement of the grossest sensualist.—Was it not as ridiculous an embarrassment as ever Yorick's spirit was involved in?—Nothing but the purest conscience of innocence could have tempted me to write this story to my wife, which by the bye would make no bad anecdote in Tristram Shandy's Life.—I have mentioned it in my journal to Mrs ——. In some respects there is no difference

between my wife and herself—when they fare alike, neither can reasonably complain—I have just received letters from France, with some hints that Mrs Sterne and my Lydia are coming to England, to pay me a visit—if your time is not better employed, Yorick flatters himself he shall receive a letter from your lordship, *en attendant*. I am with the greatest regard,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's

Most faithful humble servant,

L. STERNE.

Letter xcvi.

To J. D——n, Esq.

Old Bond-street, Friday morning.

I WAS going, my dear D——n, to bed before I received your kind enquiry, and now my chaise stands at my door to take and convey this poor body to its legal settlement.—I am ill, very ill,—I languish most affectingly—I am sick both soul and body—it is a cordial to me to hear it is different with you—no man interests himself more in your happiness, and I am glad you are in so fair a road to it—enjoy it long, my D., whilst I—no matter what—but my feelings are too nice for the world I live in—things will mend.—I dined yesterday with Lord and Lady S—; we talked much of you, and your goings on, for every one knows why Sunbury Hill is so pleasant a situation!—You rogue! you have lock'd up my boots—and I go bootless home—and I fear I shall go bootless all my life—Adieu, gentlest and best of souls—adieu.

I am yours most affectionately,

L. STERNE.

Letter xcviij.

To J— H— S—, Esq.

Newark, Monday ten o'clock in the morn.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

I HAVE got conveyed thus far like a bale of cadaverous goods consigned to Pluto and company—lying in the bottom of my chaise most of the route, upon a large pillow which I had the *prevoyance* to purchase before I set out—I am worn out—but press on to Barnby Moor to-night, and if possible to York the next.—I know not what is the matter with me—but some *derangement* presses hard upon this machine—still I think it will not be overset this bout.—My love to G.—We shall all meet from the east, and from the south, and (as at the last) be happy together—My kind respects to a few.—I am, dear H.,

Truly yours,

L. STERNE.

Letter xcviij.

To A. L——e, Esq.

DEAR L——E, Coxwold, June 7, 1767.

I HAD not been many days at this peaceful cottage before your letter greeted me with the seal of friendship, and most cordially do I thank you for so kind a proof of your good will—I was truly anxious to hear of the recovery of my sentimental friend—but I would not write to enquire after her, unless I could have sent her the testimony without the tax, for even how-d'yes to invalids, or those that have lately been so, either call to mind what is past or what may return—at least

I find it so. I am as happy as a prince, at Coxwould—and I wish you could see in how princely a manner I live—'tis a land of plenty. I sit down alone to venison, fish and wild fowl, or a couple of fowls or ducks, with curds, and strawberries, and cream, and all the simple plenty which a rich valley (under Hamilton Hills) can produce—with a clean cloth on my table—and a bottle of wine on my right hand to drink your health. I have a hundred hens and chickens about my yard—and not a parishioner catches a hare, or a rabbit or a trout, but he brings it as an offering to me. If solitude would cure a love-sick heart, I would give you an invitation—but absence and time lessen no attachment which virtue inspires. I am in high spirits—care never enters this cottage—I take the air every day in my post-chaise, with two long-tailed horses—they turn out good ones; and as to myself, I think I am better upon the whole for the medicines and regimen I submitted to in town—May you, dear L——, want neither the one, nor the other!

Yours truly,
L. STERNE.

Letter xcix.

To the same.

Coxwould, June 30, 1767.

I AM in still better health, my dear L——e, than when I wrote last to you, owing I believe to my riding out every day with my friend H——, whose castle lies near the sea—and there is a beach as even as a mirrour, of five miles in length, before it—where we daily run races in our chaises, with one wheel in the sea, and the other on land.—D—— has obtained

his fair Indian, and has this post sent a letter of enquiries after Yorick, and his Bramin. He is a good soul, and interests himself much in our fate—I cannot forgive you, L——e, for your folly in saying you intend to get introduced to the —— . I despise them, and I shall hold your understanding much cheaper than I now do, if you persist in a resolution so unworthy of you.—I suppose Mrs J—— telling you they were sensible, is the ground-work you go upon—by—they are not clever; though what is commonly called wit, may pass for literature on the other side of Temple-bar.—You say Mrs J—— thinks them amiable—she judges too favourably: but I have put a stop to her intentions of visiting them.—They are bitter enemies of mine, and I am even with them. La Bramine assured me they used their endeavours with her to break off her friendship with me, for reasons I will not write, but tell you.—I said enough of them before she left England, and though she yielded to me in every other point, yet in this she obstinately persisted.—Strange infatuation!—but I think I have effected my purpose by a falsity, which Yorick's friendship to the Bramine can only justify.—I wrote her word that the most amiable of women reiterated my request, that she would not write to them. I said too, she had concealed many things for the sake of her peace of mind—when in fact, L——e, this was merely a child of my own brain, made Mrs J——'s by adoption, to enforce the argument I had before urged so strongly.—Do not mention this circumstance to Mrs J——, 'twould displease her—and I had no design in it but for the Bramine to be a friend to herself.—I ought now to be busy from sun-rise to sun-set, for I have a book to write—a wife to receive—an estate to sell—a parish to superintend, and, what is worst of all, a disquieted heart to reason with—these are continual

calls upon me.—I have received half a dozen letters to press me to join my friends at Scarborough, but I am at present deaf to them all.—I perhaps may pass a few days there something later in the season, not at present—and so, dear L——e, adieu.

I am most cordially yours,

L. STERNE.

Letter c.

To Ignatius Sancho.

Coxwould, June 30 [1767].

I MUST acknowledge the courtesy of my good friend Sancho's letter were I ten times busier than I am, and must thank him too for the many expressions of his good will, and good opinion—"Tis all affectation to say a man is not gratified with being praised—we only want it to be sincere—and then it will be taken, Sancho, as kindly as yours. I left town very poorly—and with an idea I was taking leave of it for ever—but good air, a quiet retreat, and quiet reflections along with it, with an ass to milk, and another to ride upon (if I chuse it), all together do wonders.—I shall live this year at least, I hope, be it but to give the world, before I quit it, as good impressions of me, as you have, Sancho. I would only covenant for just so much health and spirits, as are sufficient to carry my pen through the task I have set it this summer.—But I am a resigned being, Sancho, and take health and sickness, as I do light and darkness, or the vicissitudes of seasons—that is, just as it pleases God to send them—and accommodate myself to their periodical returns, as well as I can—only taking care, whatever befalls me in this silly world—not to lose my temper at it.—This I believe, friend Sancho, to be the

truest philosophy—for this we must be indebted to ourselves, but not to our fortunes.—Farewel—I hope you will not forget your custom of giving me a call at my lodgings next winter—in the mean time, I am very cordially,

My honest friend Sancho,

Yours,

L. STERNE.

Letter ci.

To Mr and Mrs J.

Coxwould, July 6, 1767.

IT is with as much true gratitude as ever heart felt, that I sit down to thank my dear friends Mr and Mrs J—— for the continuation of their attention to me; but for this last instance of their humanity and politeness to me, I must ever be their debtor—I never can thank you enough, my dear friends, and yet I thank you from my soul—and for the single day's happiness your goodness would have sent me, I wish I could send you back thousands—I cannot, but they will come of themselves—and so God bless you.—I have had twenty times my pen in my hand since I came down, to write a letter to you both in Gerrard-street—but I am a shy kind of a soul at the bottom, and have a jealousy about troubling my friends, especially about myself.—I am now got perfectly well, but was, a month after my arrival in the country, in but a poor state—my body has got the start, and is at present more at ease than my mind—but this world is a school of trials, and so Heaven's will be done!—I hope you have both enjoyed all that I have wanted—and to complete your joy, that your little lady flourishes like a vine at your table, to which I hope to see her preferred by next winter.—I am now beginning

to be truly busy at my Sentimental Journey—the pains and sorrows of this life having retarded its progress—but I shall make up my leeway, and overtake every body in a very short time.

What can I send you that Yorkshire produces? tell me—I want to be of use to you, for I am, my dear friends, with the truest value and esteem,

Your ever obliged

L. STERNE.

Letter cii.

To Mr Panchaud, at Paris.

York, July 20, 1767.

MY DEAR PANCHAUD,

BE so kind as to forward what letters are arrived for Mrs Sterne at your office by to-day's post, or the next, and she will receive them before she quits Avignon, for England—she wants to lay out a little money in an annuity for her daughter—advise her to get her own life insured in London, lest my Lydia should die before her.—If there are any packets, send them with the ninth volume* of Shandy, which she has failed of getting—she says she has drawn for fifty louis—when she leaves Paris, send by her my account.—Have you got me any French subscriptions, or subscriptions in France?—Present my kindest service to Miss P. I know her politeness and good-nature will incline her to give Mrs J. her advice about what she may venture to bring over.—I hope every thing goes on well, though never half so well as I wish—God prosper you, my dear friend—Believe me most warmly

Yours,

L. STERNE.

* Alluding to the first edition.

The sooner you send me the gold snuff-box, the better—'tis a present from my best friend.

Letter ciiij.

To Mr and Mrs J.

Coxwould, August 2, 1767.

MY dear friends Mr and Mrs J— are infinitely kind to me, in sending now and then a letter to inquire after me—and to acquaint me how they are.—You cannot conceive, my dear lady, how truly I bear a part in your illness.—I wish Mr J— would carry you to the south of France in pursuit of health—but why need I wish it, when I know his affection will make him do that and ten times as much to prevent a return of those symptoms which alarmed him so much in the spring—Your politeness and humanity are always contriving to treat me agreeably, and what you promise next winter, will be perfectly so—but you must get well—and your little dear girl must be of the party, with her parents and friends, to give it a relish—I am sure you shew no partiality but what is natural and praise-worthy, in behalf of your daughter, but I wonder my friends will not find her a play-fellow; and I both hope and advise them not to venture along through this warfare of life without two strings at least to their bow.—I had letters from France by last night's post, by which (by some fatality) I find not one of my letters has reached Mrs Sterne. This gives me concern, as it wears the aspect of unkindness, which she by no means merits from me.—My wife and dear girl are coming to pay me a visit for a few months;—I wish I may prevail with them to tarry longer.—You

must permit me, dear Mrs J., to make my Lydia known to you, if I can prevail with my wife to come and spend a little time in London, as she returns to France. I expect a small parcel—may I trouble you, before you write next, to send to my lodgings to ask if there is any thing directed to me that you can inclose under cover.—I have but one excuse for this freedom, which I am prompted to use, from a persuasion that it is doing you pleasure to give you an opportunity of doing an obliging thing—and as to myself, I rest satisfied, for 'tis only scoring up another debt of thanks to the millions I owe you both already—Receive a thousand and a thousand thanks, yes, and with them ten thousand friendly wishes for all you wish in this world—May my friend Mr J. continue blessed with good health, and may his good lady get perfectly well, there being no woman's health or comfort I so ardently pray for.—Adieu, my dear friends—believe me most truly and faithfully yours,

L. STERNE.

P.S.—In Eliza's last Letter, dated from St Jago, she tells me, as she does you, that she is extremely ill—God protect her!—By this time surely she has set foot upon dry land at Madras—I heartily wish her well, and if Yorick was with her, he would tell her so—but he is cut off from this, by bodily absence—I am present with her in spirit, however—but what is that? you will say.



Letter civ.

To J— H— S—, Esq.

MY DEAR H., Coxwoud, August 11, 1767.

I AM glad all has passed with so much amity *inter te & filium Marcum tuum*, and that Madame has found grace in thy sight—All is well that ends well—and so much for moralizing upon it. I wish you could, or would, take up your parable, and prophecy as much good concerning me and my affairs.—Not one of my letters has got to Mrs Sterne since the notification of her intentions, which has a pitiful air on my side, though I have wrote her six or seven.—I imagine she will be here the latter end of September, though I have no date for it, but her impatience, which, having suffered by my supposed silence, I am persuaded will make her fear the worst—if that is the case, she will fly to England—a most natural conclusion.—You did well to discontinue all commerce with James's Powders—as you are so well, rejoice therefore, and let your heart be merry—mine ought upon the same score—for I never have been so well since I left college—and should be a marvellous happy man, but for some reflections which bow down my spirits—but if I live but even three or four years, I will acquit myself with honour—and—no matter! we will talk this over when we meet.—If all ends as temperately as with you, and that I find grace, &c. &c., I will come and sing *Te Deum*, or drink *poculum elevatum*, or do any thing with you in the world.—I should depend upon G—'s critic upon my head, as much, as Moliere's old woman upon his comedies—when you do not want her society, let it be carried into your bed-chamber to flay her, or clap it upon her bum—to—and give her my blessing as you do it.—

My postillion has set me a-ground for a week, by one of my pistols bursting in his hand, which he taking for granted to be quite shot off—he instantly fell upon his knees and said (Our Father, which art in Heaven, hallowed be thy Name), at which, like a good Christian, he stopped, not remembering any more of it—the affair was not so bad as he at first thought, for it has only *bursten* two of his fingers (he says).—I long to return to you, but I sit here alone as solitary and sad as a tom cat, which by the bye is all the company I keep—he follows me from the parlour, to the kitchen, into the garden, and every place—I wish I had a dog—my daughter will bring me one—and so God be about you, and strengthen your faith—I am affectionately, dear cousin, yours,

L. S.

My service to the C——, though they are from home, and to Panty.

Letter cv.

To Mr and Mrs J.

Coxwould, August 13, 1767.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

I BUT copy your great civility to me in writing you word, that I have this moment received another letter wrote eighteen days after the date of the last from St Jago—If our poor friend could have wrote another letter to England, you would in course have had it—but I fear, from the circumstance of great hurry and bodily disorder in which she was, when she dispatched this, she might not have time.—In case it has so fallen out, I send you the contents of what I have received—

and that is a melancholy history of herself and sufferings, since they left St Jago—continual and most violent rheumatism all the time—a fever brought on with fits, and attended with delirium, and every terrifying symptom—the recovery from this left her low and emaciated to a skeleton.—I give you the pain of this detail with a bleeding heart, knowing how much at the same time it will affect yours.—The three or four last days of our journal leave us with hopes she will do well at last, for she is more cheerful—and seems to be getting into better spirits; and health will follow in course. They have crossed the line—are much becalmed, by which, with other delays, she fears they will lose their passage to Madras—and be some months sooner for it at Bombay.—Heaven protect her, for she suffers much, and with uncommon fortitude.—She writes much to me about her dear friend Mrs J—in her last packet.—In truth, my good lady, she loves and honours you from her heart; but, if she did not, I should not esteem her, or wish her so well as I do.—Adieu, my dear friends—you have few in the world more truly and cordially

Yours,

L. STERNE.

P.S.—I have just received, as a present from a man I shall ever love, a most elegant gold snuff-box, fabricated for me at Paris—'tis not the first pledge I have received of his friendship.—May I presume to inclose you a letter of chit-chat which I shall write to Eliza? I know you will write yourself, and my letter may have the honour to *chaperon* yours to India—they will neither of them be the worse received for going together in company, but I fear they will get late in the year to their destined port, as they go first to Bengal.

Letter cxi.

To Miss Sterne.

Coxwold, August 24, 1767.

I AM truly surprised, my dear Lydia, that my last letter has not reached thy mother, and thyself—it looks most unkind on my part, after your having wrote me word of your mother's intention of coming to England, that she has not received my letter to welcome you both—and though in that I said I wished you would defer your journey till March, for before that time I should have published my sentimental work, and should be in town to receive you—yet I will shew you more real politesses than any you have met with in France, as mine will come warm from the heart.—I am sorry you are not here at the races, but *les fêtes champêtres* of the Marquis de Sade have made you amends.—I know B—— very well, and he is what in France would be called admirable—that would be but so so here—You are right—he studies nature more than any, or rather most of the French comedians—If the Empress of Russia pays him and his wife a pension of twenty thousand livres a year, I think he is very well off.—The folly of staying till after twelve for supper—that you two excommunicated beings might have meat!—"his conscience would not let it be served before."—Surely the Marquis thought you both, being English, could not be satisfied without it.—I would have given, not my gown and cassock (for I have but one), but my topaz ring, to have seen the *petits maîtres et maîtresses* go to mass, after having spent the night in dancing.—As to my pleasures, they are few in compass.—My poor cat sits purring beside me—your lively French dog shall have his place on the other side of my fire—but if he is as devilish as when I last saw him, I must tutor him, for I will not have my cat abused

—in short, I will have nothing devilish about me—a combustion will spoil a sentimental thought.

Another thing I must desire—do not be alarmed—'tis to throw all your rouge pots into the Sorgue before you set out—I will have no rouge put on in England—and do not bewail them as ——— did her silver seringue or glister equipage which she lost in a certain river—but take a wise resolution of doing without rouge.—I have been three days ago bad again—with a spitting of blood—and that unfeeling brute ***** came and drew my curtains, and with a voice like a trumpet, halloo'd in my ear—Z—ds, what a fine kettle of fish have you brought yourself to, Mr S——! In a faint voice, I bad him leave me, for comfort sure was never administered in so rough a manner.—Tell your mother, I hope she will purchase what either of you may want at Paris—'tis an occasion not to be lost—so write to me from Paris, that I may come and meet you in my post-chaise with my long-tailed horses—and the moment you have both put your feet in it, call it hereafter yours.—Adieu, dear Lydia—believe me, what I ever shall be,

Your affectionate father,

L. STERNE.

I think I shall not write to Avignon any more, but you will find one for you at Paris—once more adieu.

Letter cxij.

To Sir W.

September 19, 1767.

MY DEAR SIR,

You are perhaps the drollest being in the universe—Why do you banter me so about what I wrote to

you?—Tho' I told you, every morning I jump'd into Venus's lap (meaning thereby the sea) was you to infer from that, that I leap'd into the ladies beds afterwards?—The body guides you—the mind me.—I have wrote the most whimsical letter to a lady that was ever read, and talked of body and soul too—I said she had made me vain, by saying she was mine more than ever woman was—but she is not the lady of Bond-street, nor ——— square, nor the lady who supp'd with me in Bond-street on scollop'd oysters, and other such things—nor did she ever go *tête-à-tête* with me to Salt Hill.—Enough of such nonsense—The past is over—and I can justify myself unto myself—can you do as much?—No, 'faith!—"You can feel!" Aye, so can my cat, when he hears a female caterwauling on the house-top—but caterwauling disgusts me. I had rather raise a gentle flame, than have a different one raised in me.—Now I take heaven to witness, after all this *badinage*, my heart is innocent—and the sporting of my pen is equal, just equal, to what I did in my boyish days, when I got astride of a stick, and gallop'd away—The truth is this—that my pen governs me—not me my pen.—You are much to blame if you dig for marle, unless you are sure of it. I was once such a puppy myself, as to pare, and burn, and had my labour for my pains, and two hundred pounds out of my pocket. Curse on farming (said I), I will try if the pen will not succeed better than the spade. The following up of that affair (I mean farming) made me lose my temper, and a cart load of turnips was (I thought) very dear at two hundred pounds.

In all your operations may your own good sense guide you—bought experience is the devil.—Adieu, adieu!
—Believe me

Yours most truly,
L. STERNE.

Letter cxliij.

To the same.

DEAR SIR,

Coxwoud, Sept. 27, 1767.

You are arrived at Scarborough when all the world has left it—but you are an unaccountable being, and so there is nothing more to be said on the matter—You wish me to come to Scarborough, and join you to read a work that is not yet finished—besides, I have other things in my head.—My wife will be here in three or four days, and I must not be found straying in the wilderness—but I have been there. As for meeting you at Bluit's, with all my heart—I will laugh, and drink my barley-water with you. As soon as I have greeted my wife and daughter, and hired them a house at York, I shall go to London, where you generally are in Spring—and then my Sentimental Journey will, I dare say, convince you that my feelings are from the heart, and that that heart is not of the worst of moulds—praised be God for my sensibility! Though it has often made me wretched, yet I would not exchange it for all the pleasures the grossest sensualist ever felt. Write to me the day you will be at York—'tis ten to one but I may introduce you to my wife and daughter. Believe me, my good Sir,

Ever yours,

L. STERNE.



I could afford nothing for the rest,
but "Dieu vous benisse" — et le
bon Dieu vous benisse ^{encore} — said the old
Soldier — the Dwarf etc. . . and the
 pauvre bonheur could say nothing — he
pulled, a little handkerchief and wiped his
face as he ^{tripped} away — he thanked me
~~at~~ "and I thought he thanked me
more than them all."

Letter cix.

To Mr Panchaud, at Paris.

York, October 1, 1767.

DEAR SIR,

I HAVE ordered my friend Becket to advance for two months your account which my wife this day deliver'd—she is in raptures with all your civilities.—This is to give you notice to draw upon your correspondent—and Becket will deduct out of my publication.—Tomorrow morning I repair with her to Coxwould, and my Lydia seems transported with the sight of me.—Nature, dear P——, breathes in all her composition; and except a little vivacity—which is a fault in the world we live in—I am fully content with her mother's care of her.—Pardon this digression from business—but 'tis natural to speak of those we love.—As to the subscriptions which your friendship has procured me, I must have them to incorporate with my lists which are to be prefix'd to the first volume.—My wife and daughter join in millions of thanks—they will leave me the 1st of December.—Adieu, adieu!—Believe me

Yours, most truly,

L. STERNE.

Letter cx.

To Mr and Mrs J.

Coxwould, October 3, 1767.

I HAVE suffered under a strong desire for above this fortnight, to send a letter of enquiries after the health and the well-being of my dear friends, Mr and Mrs

J——; and I do assure you both, 'twas merely owing to a little modesty in my temper not to make my good-will troublesome, where I have so much, and to those I never think of, but with ideas of sensibility and obligation, that I have refrain'd.—Good God! to think I could be in town, and not go the first step I made to Gerrard-street!—My mind and body must be at sad variance with each other, should it ever fall out that it is not both the first and last place also where I shall betake myself, were it only to say, “God bless you”—May you have every blessing he can send you! 'tis a part of my litany, where you will always have a place whilst I have a tongue to repeat it—And so you heard I had left Scarborough, which you would no more credit, than the reasons assign'd for it—I thank you for it kindly—tho' you have not told me what they were; being a shrewd divine, I think I can guess.—I was ten days at Scarborough in September, and was hospitably entertained by one of the best of our Bishops; who, as he kept house there, press'd me to be with him—and his household consisted of a gentleman, and two ladies,—which, with the good Bishop and myself, made so good a party that we kept much to ourselves.—I made in this time a connection of great friendship with my mitred host, who would gladly have taken me with him back to Ireland.—However, we all left Scarborough together, and lay fifteen miles off, where we kindly parted—Now it was supposed (and have since heard) that I e'en went on with the party to London, and this I suppose was the reason assign'd for my being there.—I dare say charity would add a little to the account, and give out that 'twas on the score of one, and perhaps both of the ladies—and I will excuse charity on that head, for a heart disengaged could not well have done better.—I have been hard

writing ever since—and hope by Christmas I shall be able to give a gentle rap at your door—and tell you how happy I am to see my two good friends.—I assure you I spur on my Pegasus more violently upon that account, and am now determined not to draw bit, till I have finished this Sentimental Journey—which I hope to lay at your feet, as a small (but a very honest) testimony of the constant truth with which I am,

My dear friends,

Your ever obliged

And grateful

L. STERNE.

P.S.—My wife and daughter arrived here last night from France.—My girl has return'd an elegant accomplished little slut—my wife—but I hate to praise my wife—'tis as much as decency will allow to praise my daughter.—I suppose they will return next summer to France.—They leave me in a month to reside at York for the winter—and I stay at Coxwould till the first of January.

Letter cxi.

To Mrs F—.

Coxwould, Friday.

DEAR MADAM,

I RETURN you a thousand thanks for your obliging enquiry after me—I got down last summer very much worn out—and much worse at the end of my journey—I was forced to call at his Grace's house (the Archbishop of York) to refresh myself a couple of days upon the road near Doncaster—Since I got home to quietness, and temperance, and good books, and good

hours, I have mended—and am now very stout—and in a fortnight's time shall perhaps be as well as you yourself could wish me.—I have the pleasure to acquaint you that my wife and daughter are arrived from France—I shall be in town to greet my friends by the first of January.—Adieu, dear madam—Believe me

Yours sincerely,

L. STERNE.

Letter cxii.

To Mrs H.

Coxwoud, October 12, 1767.

EVER since my dear H. wrote me word she was mine, more than ever woman was, I have been racking my memory to inform me where it was that you and I had that affair together.—People think that I have had many, some in body, some in mind; but as I told you before, you have had me more than any woman—therefore you must have had me, H——, both in mind, and in body.—Now I cannot recollect where it was, nor exactly when—it could not be the lady in Bond-street, or Grosvenor-street, or ——— Square, or Pall-mall.—We shall make it out, H., when we meet—I impatiently long for it—'tis no matter—I cannot now stand writing to you to-day—I will make it up next post—for dinner is upon table, and if I make Lord F—— stay, he will not frank this.—How do you do? Which parts of Tristram do you like best?—God bless you.

Yours,

L. STERNE.

Letter cxiiij.

To Mr and Mrs J——.

Coxwould, November 12, 1767.

FORGIVE me, dear Mrs J——, if I am troublesome in writing something betwixt a letter and a card, to enquire after you and my good friend Mr J——, whom 'tis an age since I have heard a syllable of.——I think so, however, and never more felt the want of a house I esteem so much, as I do now when I can hear tidings of it so seldom—and have nothing to recompense my desires of seeing its kind possessors, but the hopes before me of doing it by Christmas.—I long sadly to see you—and my friend Mr J——. I am still at Coxwould—my wife and girl * here.—She is a dear good creature—affectionate, and most elegant in body, and mind—she is all heaven could give me in a daughter—but like other blessings, not given, but lent; for her mother loves France—and this dear part of me must be torn from my arms to follow her mother, who seems inclined to establish her in France, where she has had many advantageous offers.—Do not smile at my weakness, when I say I don't wonder at it, for she is as accomplish'd a slut as France can produce.—You shall excuse all this—if you won't, I desire Mr J—— to be my advocate—but I know I don't want one.—With what pleasure shall I embrace your dear little pledge—whom I hope to see every hour increasing in stature, and in favour, both with God and man!—I kiss all your hands with a most devout and friendly heart.—No man can wish

* Mrs Medalle thinks an apology may be necessary for publishing this Letter—the best she can offer is—that it was written by a fond parent (whose commendation she is proud of) to a very sincere friend.

you more good than your meagre friend does—few so much, for I am with infinite cordiality, gratitude, and honest affection,

My dear Mrs J——,

Your ever faithful

L. STERNE.

P.S.—My Sentimental Journey will please Mrs J——, and my Lydia—I can answer for those two. It is a subject which works well, and suits the frame of mind I have been in for some time past—I told you my design in it was to teach us to love the world and our fellow-creatures better than we do—so it runs most upon those gentler passions and affections, which aid so much to it. Adieu, and may you and my worthy friend Mr J—— continue examples of the doctrine I teach!

Letter cxiv.

To Mrs H.

Coxwold, Nov. 15, 1767.

Now be a good dear woman, my H——, and execute these commissions well—and when I see you I will give you a kiss—there's for you!—But I have something else for you which I am fabricating at a great rate, and that is my Sentimental Journey, which shall make you cry as much as it has affected me—or I will give up the business of sentimental writing—and write to the body—that is, H., what I am doing in writing to you—but you are a *good body*, which is worth half a score mean souls.—

I am yours, &c. &c.,

L. SHANDY.

Letter xv.

To A. L——e, Esq.

Coxwould, November 19, 1767.

You make yourself unhappy, dear L——e, by imaginary ills—which you might shun instead of putting yourself in the way of.—Would not any man in his senses fly from the object he adores, and not waste his time and his health in increasing his misery by so vain a pursuit?—The idol of your heart is one of ten thousand.—The Duke of —— has long sighed in vain—and can you suppose a woman will listen to you that is proof against titles, stars, and red ribands?—Her heart (believe me, L——e) will not be taken in by fine men, or fine speeches—if it should ever feel a preference, it will chuse an object for itself, and it must be a singular character that can make an impression on such a being—she has a platonic way of thinking, and knows love only by name—the natural reserve of her character, which you complain of, proceeds not from pride, but from a superiority of understanding, which makes her despise every man that turns himself into a fool—Take my advice, and pay your addresses to Miss ——; she esteems you, and time will wear off an attachment which has taken so deep a root in your heart.—I pity you from my soul—but we are all born with passions which ebb and flow (else they would play the devil with us) to different objects—and the best advice I can give you, L——e, is to turn the tide of yours another way.—I know not whether I shall write again while I stay at Coxwould.—I am in earnest at my sentimental work—and intend being in town soon after Christmas—in the mean time adieu.—Let me hear from you, and believe me, dear L.,

Yours, &c.,

L. STERNE.

Letter cxi.

To the Earl of ———.

MY LORD, Coxwold, November 28, 1767.

'Tis with the greatest pleasure I take my pen to thank your Lordship for your letter of enquiry about Yorick—he has worn out both his spirits and body with the *Sentimental Journey*—'tis true that an author must feel himself, or his reader will not—but I have torn my whole frame into pieces by my feelings—I believe the brain stands as much in need of recruiting as the body—therefore I shall set out for town the twentieth of next month, after having recruited myself a week at York. I might indeed solace myself with my wife (who is come from France), but in fact I have long been a sentimental being—whatever your Lordship may think to the contrary. The world has imagined, because I wrote *Tristram Shandy*, that I was myself more *Shandean* than I really ever was—'tis a good-natured world we live in, and we are often painted in divers colours according to the ideas each one frames in his head.——A very agreeable lady arrived three years ago at York, in her road to Scarborough—I had the honour of being acquainted with her, and was her *chaperon*—all the females were very inquisitive to know who she was—“Do not tell, ladies, 'tis a mistress my wife has recommended to me—nay moreover has sent her from France.”——

I hope my book will please you, my Lord, and then my labour will not be totally in vain. If it is not thought a chaste book, mercy on them that read it, for they must have warm imaginations indeed!—Can your Lordship forgive my not making this a longer epistle?

——In short, I can but add this, which you already know—that I am with gratitude and friendship,

My Lord,

Your obedient faithful

L. STERNE.

If your Lordship is in town in Spring, I should be happy if you became acquainted with my friends in Gerrard-street—you would esteem the husband, and honour the wife—she is the reverse of most of her sex—they have various pursuits—she but one—that of pleasing her husband.—

Letter cxvii.

To his Excellency Sir G. M.

Coxwold, December 3, 1767.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

FOR tho' you are his Excellency, and I still but parson Yorick—I still must call you so—and were you to be next Emperor of Russia, I could not write to you, or speak of you, under any other relation—I felicitate you, I don't say how much, because I can't—I always had something like a kind of revelation within me, which pointed out this track for you, in which you are so happily advanced—it was not only my wishes for you, which were ever ardent enough to impose upon a visionary brain, but I thought I actually saw you just where you now are—and that is just, my dear Macartney, where you should be.—I should long, long ago have acknowledged the kindness of a letter of yours from Petersbourg; but hearing daily accounts you was leaving it—this is the first time I knew well *where* my thanks

would find you—how they will find you, I know well—that is—the same I ever knew you. In three weeks I shall kiss your hand—and sooner, if I can finish my *Sentimental Journey*.—The deuce take all sentiments! I wish there was not one in the world!—My wife is come to pay me a sentimental visit as far as from Avignon—and the *politesse* arising from such a proof of her urbanity has robb'd me of a month's writing, or I had been in town now.—I am going to lye-in; being at Christmas at my full reckoning—and unless what I shall bring forth is not *press'd* to death by these devils of printers, I shall have the honour of presenting to you a *couple of as clean brats* as ever chaste brain conceived—they are frolicksome too, *mais cela n'empêche pas*—I put your name down with many wrong and right *honourables*, knowing you would take it not well if I did not make myself happy with it. Adieu, my dear friend.

Believe me yours, &c.,
L. STERNE.

P.S.—If you see Mr Crawford, tell him I greet him kindly.

Letter cxviii.

To A. L——e, Esq.

DEAR L., Coxwold, December 7, 1767.

I SAID I would not perhaps write any more, but it would be unkind not to reply to so interesting a letter as yours—I am certain you may depend upon Lord ——'s promises—he will take care of you in the best manner he can, and your knowledge of the world, and of languages in particular, will make you useful in any

department—If his Lordship's scheme does not succeed, leave the kingdom—go to the east, or the west, for travelling would be of infinite service to both your body and mind—But more of this when we meet—now to my own affairs.—I have had an offer of exchanging two pieces of preferment I hold here, for a living of three hundred and fifty pounds a year in Surry, about thirty miles from London, and retaining Coxwoud, and my prebendaryship—the country also is sweet—but I will not, cannot come to any determination, till I have consulted with you, and my other friends.—I have great offers too in Ireland—the bishops of C—— and R—— are both my friends—but I have rejected every proposal, unless Mrs S—— and my Lydia could accompany me thither—I live for the sake of my girl, and with her sweet light burthen in my arms, I could get up fast the hill of preferment, if I chose it—but without my Lydia, if a mitre was offered me, it would sit uneasy upon my brow.—Mrs S——'s health is insupportable in England.—She must return to France, and justice and humanity forbid me to oppose it.—I will allow her enough to live comfortably, until she can rejoin me.—My heart bleeds, L—e, when I think of parting with my child——'twill be like the separation of soul and body—and equal to nothing but what passes at that tremendous moment; and like it in one respect, for she will be in one kingdom, whilst I am in another.—You will laugh at my weakness—but I cannot help it—for she is a dear disinterested girl—As a proof of it—when she left Coxwoud, and I bad her adieu, I pulled out my purse and offered her ten guineas for her private pleasures—her answer was pretty, and affected me too much: “No, my dear papa, our expences of coming from France may have straitened you—I would rather put an hundred guineas into your pocket than take ten out of it.”—I burst into tears—but why do I

practise on your feelings—by dwelling on a subject that will touch your heart?—It is too much melted already by its own sufferings, L—e, for me to add a pang, or cause a single sigh.—God bless you—I shall hope to greet you by New-year's-day in perfect health—Adieu, my dear friend—I am most truly and cordially yours,

L. STERNE.

Letter cxi.

To J—H—S—, Esq.

[December, 1767.]

LITERAS vestras lepidissimas, mi consobrine, consobrinis meis omnibus carior, accepi die Veneris; sed posta non rediebat versus Aquilonem eo die, aliter scripsissem prout desiderabas. Nescio quid est materia cum me, sed sum fatigatus & ægrotus de meâ uxore plus quam unquam—& sum possessus cum diabolo qui pellet me in urbem—& tu es possessus cum eodem malo spiritu qui te tenet in deserto esse tentatum ancillis tuis, et perturbatum uxore tuâ—crede mihi, mi Antoni, quod isthæc non est via ad salutem sive hodiernam, sive eternam; num tu incipis cogitare de pecuniâ, quæ, ut ait Sanctus Paulus, est radix omnium malorum, & non satis dicis in corde tuo, ego Antonius de Castello Infirmo, sum jam quadraginta & plus annos natus, & explevi octavum meum lustrum, et tempus est me curare, & meipsum Antonium facere hominem felicem & liberum, et mihimet ipsi benefacere, ut exhortatur Solomon, qui dicit quodd nihil est melius in hâc vitâ, quàm quòd homo vivat festivè, & quòd edat et bibat, & bono fruatur, quia hoc est sua portio & dos in hoc mundo.

Nunc te scire vellemus, quodd non debeo esse repre-

hendi pro festinando eundo ad Londinum, quia Deus est testis, quòd non propero præ gloria, & pro me ostendere; nam diabolus iste qui me intravit, non est diabolus vanus, at consobrinus suus Lucifer—sed est diabolus amabundus, qui non vult sinere me esse solum; nam cùm non cumbendo cum uxore meâ, sum mentulior quàm par est—& sum mortaliter in amore—& sum fatuus; ergo tu me, mi care Antoni, excusabis, quoniam tu fuisti in amore, & per mare & per terras ivisti & festinâsti sicut diabolus, eodem te propellente diabolo. Habeo multa ad te scribere—sed scribo hanc epistolam in domo coffeatoriâ & plenâ sociorum strepitosorum, qui non permittent me cogitare unam cogitationem.

Saluta amicum Panty meum, cujus literis respondebo—saluta amicos in domo Gisbrosensi, & oro, credas me vinculo consobrinitalis & amoris ad te, mi Antoni, devinctissimum,

L. STERNE.

Letter cxx.

To Mr and Mrs J.

York, December 23, 1767.

I WAS afraid that either Mr or Mrs J——, or their little blossom, was drooping—or that some of you were ill, by not having the pleasure of a line from you, and was thinking of writing again to inquire after you all——when I was cast down myself with a fever, and bleeding at my lungs, which had confined me to my room near three weeks—when I had the favour of yours, which till to-day I have not been able to thank you both kindly for, as I most cordially now do—as

well as for all your professions and proofs of good-will to me.—I will not say I have not balanced accounts with you in this—All I know is, that I honour and value you more than I do any good creatures upon earth—and that I could not wish your happiness, and the success of whatever conduces to it, more than I do, was I your brother—but, good God! are we not all brothers and sisters who are friendly, virtuous, and good? Surely, my dear friends, my illness has been a sort of sympathy for your afflictions upon the score of your dear little one.—I am worn down to a shadow; but, as my fever has left me, I set off the latter end of next week with my friend Mr Hall for town—I need not tell my friends in Gerrard-street, I shall do myself the honour to visit them, before either Lord —— or Lord ——, &c. &c.—I thank you, my dear friend, for what you say so kindly about my daughter—it shews your good heart, for as she is a stranger, 'tis a free gift in you—but when she is known to you, she shall win it fairly—but, alas! when this event is to happen, is in the clouds. Mrs S— has hired a house ready furnished at York, till she returns to France, and my Lydia must not leave her.

What a sad scratch of a letter!—but I am weak, my dear friends, both in body and mind—so God bless you—you will see me enter like a ghost—so I tell you before-hand not to be frightened.—I am, my dear friends, with the truest attachment and esteem, ever yours,

L. STERNE.



Letter cxi.

To the same.

Old Bond-street, January 1 [1768].

NOT knowing whether the moisture of the weather will permit me to give my kind friends in Gerrard-street a call this morning for five minutes—I beg leave to send them all the good wishes, compliments, and respects I owe them.—I continue to mend, and doubt not but this, with all other evils and uncertainties of life, will end for the best.—I send all compliments to your fire-sides this Sunday night—Miss Ascough the wise, Miss Pigot the witty, your daughter the pretty, and so on.—If Lord O—— is with you, I beg my dear Mrs J—— will present the inclosed to him——’twill add to the millions of obligations I already owe you.—I am sorry that I am no subscriber to Soho this season—it deprives me of a pleasure worth twice the subscription——but I am just going to send about this quarter of the town, to see if it is not too late to procure a ticket, undisposed of, from some of my Soho friends; and if I can succeed, I will either send or wait upon you with it by half an hour after three to-morrow—if not, my friend will do me the justice to believe me truly miserable.—I am half engaged, or more, for dinner on Sunday next, but will try to get disengaged in order to be with my friends.—If I cannot, I will glide like a shadow uninvited to Gerrard-street some day this week, that we may eat our bread and meat in love and peace together.—God bless you both!—I am, with the most sincere regard,

Your ever obliged

L. STERNE.

Letter cxxij.

To the same.

Old Bond-street, Monday.
 MY DEAR FRIENDS,

I HAVE never been a moment at rest since I wrote yesterday about this Soho ticket—I have been at a Secretary of State to get one—have been upon one knee to my friends Sir G—— M——, Mr Lascelles—and Mr Fitzmaurice——without mentioning five more—I believe I could as soon get you a place at court, for every body is going—but I will go out and try a new circle—and if you do not hear from me by a quarter after three, you may conclude I have been unfortunate in my supplications.—I send you this state of the affair, lest my silence should make you think I had neglected what I promised—but no—Mrs J—— knows me better, and would never suppose it would be out of the head of one who is with so much truth

Her faithful friend,

L. STERNE.

Letter cxxij.

To the same.

Thursday, Old Bond-street.

A THOUSAND thanks, and as many excuses, my dear friends, for the trouble my blunder has given you. By a second note I am astonished I could read Saturday for Sunday, or make any mistake in a card wrote by Mrs J——s, in which my friend is as unrivalled, as in a hundred greater excellencies.

I am now tied down neck and heels (twice over)

by engagements every day this week, or most joyfully would have trod the old pleasing road from Bond to Gerrard-street.—My books will be to be had on Thursday, but possibly on Wednesday in the afternoon.—I am quite well, but exhausted with a room full of company every morning till dinner—How do I lament I cannot eat my morsel (which is always sweet) with such kind friends!—The Sunday following I will assuredly wait upon you both—and will come a quarter before four, that I may have both a little time and a little day-light, to see Mrs J——'s picture.—I beg leave to assure my friends of my gratitude for all their favours, with my sentimental thanks for every token of their good will.—Adieu, my dear friends—

I am truly yours,
L. STERNE.

Letter cxxiv.

*From Dr Eustace, in America, to the Rev. Mr Sterne,
with a Walking-Stick.*

SIR,

WHEN I assure you that I am a great admirer of Tristram Shandy, and have, ever since his introduction into the world, been one of his most zealous defenders against the repeated assaults of prejudice and misapprehension, I hope you will not treat this unexpected appearance in his company as an intrusion.

You know it is an observation, as remarkable for its truth as for its antiquity, that a similitude of sentiments is the general parent of friendship.—It cannot be wondered at, that I should conceive an esteem for a person whom nature had most indulgently enabled to frisk and curvet with ease through all these intri-

cacies of sentiments, which, from irresistible propensity, she had impelled me to trudge through without merit or distinction.

The only reason that gave rise to this address to you, is my accidentally having met with a piece of true Shandean statuary, I mean, according to vulgar opinion, for to such judges both appear equally destitute of regularity or design.—It was made by a very ingenious gentleman of this province, and presented to the late Governor Dobbs; after his death Mrs D. gave it me: its singularity made many desirous of procuring it; but I had resolved at first not to part with it, till, upon reflection, I thought it would be a very proper, and probably not an unacceptable, compliment to my favourite author, and in his hands might prove as ample a field for meditation, as a button-hole, or a broomstick.

I have the honour to be, &c. &c.

Letter cxxv.

Mr Sterne's Answer.

SIR,

London, Feb. 9, 1768.

I THIS moment received your obliging letter, and Shandean piece of sculpture along with it, of both which testimonies of your regard I have the justest sense, and return you, dear Sir, my best thanks and acknowledgment. Your walking-stick is in no sense more Shandaick than in that of its having more handles than one; the parallel breaks only in this, that, in using the stick, every one will take the handle which suits his convenience. In Tristram

Shandy, the handle is taken which suits the passions, their ignorance, or their sensibility. There is so little true feeling in the herd of the world, that I wish I could have got an act of parliament, when the books first appeared, that none but wise men should look into them. It is too much to write books, and find heads to understand them; the world, however, seems to come into a better temper about them, the people of genius here being to a man on its side; and the reception it has met with in France, Italy, and Germany, has engaged one part of the world to give it a second reading. The other, in order to be on the strongest side, has at length agreed to speak well of it too. A few hypocrites and Tartuffes, whose approbation could do it nothing but dishonour, remain unconverted.

I am very proud, Sir, to have had a man like you on my side from the beginning; but it is not in the power of every one to taste humour, however he may wish it; it is the gift of God; and, besides, a true feeler always brings half the entertainment along with him; his own ideas are only called forth by what he reads, and the vibrations within him entirely correspond with those excited.—'Tis like reading himself—and not the book.

In a week's time I shall be delivered of two volumes of the *Sentimental Travels* of Mr Yorick through France and Italy; but, alas! the ship sails three days too soon, and I have but to lament it deprives me of the pleasure of presenting them to you.

Believe me, dear Sir, with great thanks for the honour you have done me, with true esteem,

Your obliged humble servant,

LAURENCE STERNE.

Letter cxxvi.

To L. S———n, Esq.

DEAR SIR, Old Bond-street, Wednesday.

YOUR commendations are very flattering. I know no one whose judgment I think more highly of, but your partiality for me is the only instance in which I can call it in question.—Thanks, my good Sir, for the prints—I am much your debtor for them—if I recover from my ill state of health, and live to revisit Cox—would this summer, I will decorate my study with them, along with six beautiful pictures I have already of the sculptures on poor Ovid's tomb, which were executed on marble at Rome.—It grieves one to think such a man should have died in exile, who wrote so well on the art of love.—Do not think me encroaching if I solicit a favour—'tis either to borrow, or beg (to beg if you please) some of those touched with chalk which you brought from Italy—I believe you have three sets, and if you can spare the imperfect one of cattle on colour'd paper, 'twill answer my purpose, which is namely this, to give a friend of ours.—You may be ignorant she has a genius for drawing, and whatever she excels in she conceals, and her humility adds lustre to her accomplishments—I presented her last year with colours, and an apparatus for painting, and gave her several lessons before I left town.—I wish her to follow this art, to be a complete mistress of it—and it is singular enough, but not more singular than true, that she does not know how to make a cow or a sheep, tho' she draws figures and landscapes perfectly well; which makes me wish her to copy from

good prints.—If you come to town next week, and dine where I am engaged next Sunday, call upon me and take me with you—I breakfast with Mr Beauclerc, and am engaged for an hour afterwards with Lord O——; so let our meeting be either at your house or my lodgings—do not be late, for we will go half an hour before dinner, to see a picture executed by West, most admirably—he has caught the character of our friend—such goodness is painted in that face, that when one looks at it, let the soul be ever so much unharmonized, it is impossible it should remain so.—I will send you a set of my books—they will take with the generality—the women will read this book in the parlour, and Tristram in the bed-chamber.—Good night, dear Sir—I am going to take my whey, and then to bed. Believe me

Yours most truly,
L. STERNE.

Letter cxxvii.

To Miss Sterne.

February 20, Old Bond-street.

MY DEAREST LYDIA,

My Sentimental Journey, you say, is admired in York by every one—and 'tis not vanity in me to tell you that it is no less admired here—but what is the gratification of my feelings on this occasion?—The want of health bows me down, and vanity harbours not in thy father's breast—this vile influenza—be not alarm'd, I think I shall get the better of it—and shall be with you both the first of May; and if I escape, 'twill not

be for a long period, my child—unless a quiet retreat and peace of mind can restore me.—The subject of thy letter has astonish'd me.—She could but know little of my feelings, to tell thee, that under the supposition I should survive thy mother, I should bequeath thee as a legacy to ——. No, my Lydia! 'tis a lady, whose virtues I wish thee to imitate, that I shall entrust my girl to—I mean that friend whom I have so often talk'd and wrote about—from her you will learn to be an affectionate wife, a tender mother, and a sincere friend—and you cannot be intimate with her, without her pouring some part of the milk of human kindness into your breast, which will serve to check the heat of your own temper, which you partake in a small degree of.—Nor will that amiable woman put my Lydia under the painful necessity to fly to India for protection, whilst it is in her power to grant her a more powerful one in England.—But I think, my Lydia, that thy mother will survive me—do not deject her spirits with thy apprehensions on my account. I have sent you a necklace, buckles, and the same to your mother.—My girl cannot form a wish that is in the power of her father, that he will not gratify her in—and I cannot in justice be less kind to thy mother.—I am never alone ———The kindness of my friends is ever the same—I wish tho' I had thee to nurse me—but I am deny'd that.—Write to me twice a week, at least.—God bless thee, my child, and believe me ever, ever thy

Affectionate father,

L S.

Letter cxxviii.

To Mrs J——.

Tuesday.

YOUR poor friend is scarce able to write—he has been at death's door this week with a pleurisy—I was bled three times on Thursday, and blister'd on Friday—The physician says I am better—God knows, for I feel myself sadly wrong, and shall, if I recover, be a long while of gaining strength.—Before I have gone thro' half this letter, I must stop to rest my weak hand above a dozen times.—Mr J—— was so good to call upon me yesterday. I felt emotions not to be described at the sight of him, and he overjoy'd me by talking a great deal of you.—Do, dear Mrs J——, entreat him to come to-morrow, or next day, for perhaps I have not many days, or hours, to live—I want to ask a favour of him, if I find myself worse—that I shall beg of you, if in this wrestling I come off conqueror—my spirits are fled—'tis a bad omen—do not weep, my dear Lady—your tears are too precious to shed for me—bottle them up, and may the cork never be drawn.—Dearest, kindest, gentlest and best of women! may health, peace, and happiness prove your handmaids!—If I die, cherish the remembrance of me, and forget the follies which you so often condemn'd—which my heart, not my head, betrayed me into. Should my child, my Lydia want a mother, may I hope you will (if she is left parentless) take her to your bosom?—You are the only woman on earth I can depend upon for such a benevolent action.—I wrote to her a fortnight ago,* and told her what I

* From this circumstance it may be conjectured, that this Letter was written on Tuesday the 8th of March 1768, ten days before Mr Sterne died.

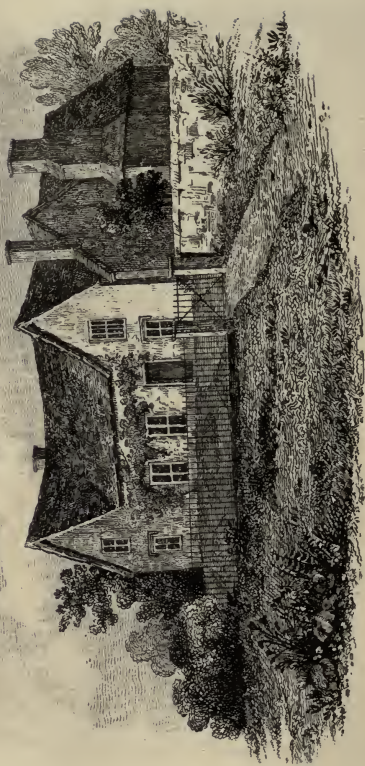
trust she will find in you.—Mr J—— will be a father to her—he will protect her from every insult, for he wears a sword which he has served his country with, and which he would know how to draw out of the scabbard in defence of innocence—Commend me to him—as I now commend you to that Being who takes under his care the good and kind part of the world.—Adieu—All grateful thanks to you and Mr J——.

Your poor affectionate friend,

L. STERNE.



SERMONS.



The Parsonage House, Exmouth.



SERMONS.

Sermon i. [ij.]*

THE HOUSE OF FEASTING AND THE HOUSE OF MOURNING DESCRIBED.

"It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting."—ECCLESIASTES vii. 2, 3.

THAT I deny—but let us hear the wise man's reasoning upon it—for *that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to his heart: sorrow is better than laughter*—for a crack-brain'd order of Carthusian monks, I grant, but not for men of the world: For what purpose, do you imagine, has God made us? for the social sweets of the well-water'd vallies, where he has planted us, or for the dry and dismal desert of a *Sierra Morena*? are the sad accidents of life, and the uncheery hours which perpetually overtake us, are they not enough, but we must sally forth in quest of them,—belye our own hearts, and say as your text would have us, that they are better than those of joy? did the Best of Beings send us into the world for this end—to go weeping through it,—to vex and shorten a life short and vexatious enough

* The numbers in brackets at the head of the Sermons are those of the original Edition.

already? do you think, my good preacher, that he who is infinitely happy, can envy us our enjoyments? or that a Being so infinitely kind would grudge a mournful traveller the short rest and refreshments necessary to support his spirits through the stages of a weary pilgrimage? or that he would call him to a severe reckoning, because in his way he had hastily snatched at some little fugacious pleasures, merely to sweeten this uneasy journey of life, and reconcile him to the ruggedness of the road, and the many hard justlings he is sure to meet with? Consider, I beseech you, what provision and accommodation the Author of our being has prepared for us, that we might not go on our way sorrowing—how many caravanseras of rest—what powers and faculties he has given us for taking it—what apt objects he has placed in our way to entertain us;—some of which he has made so fair, so exquisitely fitted for this end, that they have power over us for a time to charm away the sense of pain, to cheer up the dejected heart under poverty and sickness, and make it go and remember its miseries no more.

I will not contend at present against this rhetoric; I would chuse rather for a moment to go on with the allegory, and say we are travellers, and, in the most affecting sense of that idea, that like travellers, though upon business of the last and nearest concern to us, we may surely be allowed to amuse ourselves with the natural or artificial beauties of the country we are passing through, without reproach of forgetting the main errand we are sent upon; and if we can so order it, as not to be led out of the way, by the variety of prospects, edifices, and ruins which solicit us, it would be a nonsensical piece of saint-errantry, to shut our eyes.

But let us not lose sight of the argument in pursuit of the simile.

Let us remember, various as our excursions are—

that we have still set our faces towards Jerusalem—that we have a place of rest and happiness, towards which we hasten, and that the way to get there is not so much to please our hearts, as to improve them in virtue;—that mirth and feasting are usually no friends to achievements of this kind—but that a season of affliction is in some sort a season of piety—not only because our sufferings are apt to put us in mind of our sins, but that by the check and interruption which they give to our pursuits, they allow us what the hurry and bustle of the world too often deny us,—and that is, a little time for reflection, which is all that most of us want to make us wiser and better men;—that at certain times it is so necessary a man's mind should be turned towards itself, that rather than want occasions, he had better purchase them at the expence of his present happiness.—He had better, as the text expresses it, *go to the house of mourning*, where he will meet with something to subdue his passions, than to the house of feasting, where the joy and gaiety of the place is likely to excite them: That whereas the entertainments and caresses of the one place expose his heart and lay it open to temptations—the sorrows of the other defend it, and as naturally shut them from it. So strange and unaccountable a creature is man! he is so framed, that he cannot but pursue happiness—and yet unless he is made sometimes miserable, how apt is he to mistake the way which can only lead him to the accomplishment of his own wishes!

This is the full force of the wise man's declaration.—But to do farther justice to his words, I will endeavour to bring the subject still nearer.—For which purpose, it will be necessary to stop here, and take a transient view of the two places here referred to,—the house of mourning, and the house of feasting. Give me leave therefore, I beseech you, to recall both of

them for a moment, to your imaginations, that from thence I may appeal to your hearts, how faithfully, and upon what good grounds, the effects and natural operations of each upon our minds are intimated in the text.

And first, let us look into the house of feasting.

And here, to be as fair and candid as possible in the description of this, we will not take it from the worst originals, such as are opened merely for the sale of virtue, and so calculated for the end, that the disguise each is under, not only gives power safely to drive on the bargain, but safely to carry it into execution too.

This we will not suppose to be the case—nor let us even imagine the house of feasting to be such a scene of intemperance and excess, as the house of feasting does often exhibit—but let us take it from one, as little exceptionable as we can—where there is, or at least appears, nothing really criminal—but where every thing seems to be kept within the visible bounds of moderation and sobriety.

Imagine then such a house of feasting, where, either by consent or invitation, a number of each sex is drawn together, for no other purpose but the enjoyment and mutual entertainment of each other, which we will suppose shall arise from no other pleasures but what custom authorises, and religion does not absolutely forbid.

Before we enter—let us examine, what must be the sentiments of each individual previous to his arrival, and we shall find, that however they may differ from one another in tempers and opinions, that every one seems to agree in this—that as he is going to a house dedicated to joy and mirth, it was fit he should divest himself of whatever was likely to contradict that intention, or be inconsistent with it.—That for this purpose, he had left his cares—his serious thoughts—and his moral reflections behind him, and was come forth from

home with only such dispositions and gaiety of heart as suited the occasion, and promoted the intended mirth and jollity of the place. With this preparation of mind, which is as little as can be supposed, since it will amount to no more than a desire in each to render himself an acceptable guest,—let us conceive them entering into the house of feasting, with hearts set loose from grave restraints, and open to the expectations of receiving pleasure. It is not necessary, as I premised, to bring intemperance into this scene—or to suppose such an excess in the gratification of the appetites, as shall ferment the blood and set the desires in a flame:—Let us admit no more of it, therefore, than will gently stir them, and fit them for the impressions which so benevolent a commerce will naturally excite. In this disposition, thus wrought upon beforehand and already improved to this purpose,—take notice how mechanically the thoughts and spirits rise—how soon and insensibly they are got above the pitch and first bounds which cooler hours would have marked.

When the gay and smiling aspect of things has begun to leave the passages to a man's heart thus thoughtlessly unguarded—when kind and caressing looks of every object without, that can flatter his senses, have conspired with the enemy within, to betray him, and put him off his defence,—when music likewise hath lent her aid, and tried her power upon the passions,—when the voice of singing men, and the voice of singing women, with the sound of the viol and the lute, have broke in upon his soul, and in some tender notes have touched the secret springs of rapture,—that moment let us dissect and look into his heart,—see how vain! how weak! how empty a thing it is! Look through its several recesses,—those pure mansions formed for the reception of innocence and virtue—sad spectacle! Behold those fair inhabitants

now dispossessed—turned out of their sacred dwellings, to make room—for what?—at the best for levity and indiscretion—perhaps for folly—it may be for more impure guests, which possibly in so general a riot of the mind and senses, may take occasion to enter unsuspected at the same time.

In a scene and disposition thus described—can the most cautious say—thus far shall my desires go—and no farther? or will the coolest and most circumspect say, when pleasure has taken full possession of his heart, that no thought nor purpose shall arise there, which he would have concealed?—In those loose and unguarded moments the imagination is not always at command—in spite of reason and reflection, it will forcibly carry him sometimes whither he would not—like the unclean spirit, in the parent's sad description of his child's case, which took him, and oft-times cast him into the fire to destroy him, and wheresoever it taketh him it teareth him, and hardly departeth from him.

But this, you'll say, is the worst account of what the mind may suffer here.

Why may we not make more favourable suppositions?—that numbers, by exercise and custom to such encounters, learn gradually to despise and triumph over them;—that the minds of many are not so susceptible of warm impressions, or so badly fortified against them, that pleasure should easily corrupt or soften them;—that it would be hard to suppose, of the great multitudes which daily throng and press into this house of feasting, but that numbers come out of it again, with all the innocence with which they entered;—and that if both sexes are included in the computation, what *fair* examples shall we see of many of so pure and chaste a turn of mind—that the house of feasting, with all its charms and temptations, was never able to excite a thought, or awaken an inclination which virtue need

to blush at—or which the most scrupulous conscience might not support. God forbid we should say otherwise:—No doubt, numbers of all ages escape unhurt, and get off this dangerous sea without shipwreck. Yet are they not to be reckoned amongst the more fortunate adventurers;—and though one would not absolutely prohibit the attempt, or be so cynical as to condemn every one who tries it, since there are so many, I suppose, who cannot well do otherwise, and whose condition and situation in life unavoidably force them upon it—yet we may be allowed to describe this fair and flattering coast—we may point out the unsuspected dangers of it, and warn the unwary passenger where they lie. We may shew him what hazards his youth and inexperience will run, how little he can gain by the venture, and how much wiser and better it would be (as is implied in the text) to seek occasions rather to improve his little stock of virtue, than incautiously expose it to so unequal a chance, where the best he can hope is to return safe with what treasure he carried out—but where, probably, he may be so unfortunate as to lose it all—be lost himself, and undone for ever.

Thus much for the house of feasting; which, by the way, though generally open at other times of the year throughout the world, is supposed, in christian countries, now every where to be universally shut up. And, in truth, I have been more full in my cautions against it, not only as reason requires,—but in reverence to this season,* wherein our church exacts a more particular forbearance and self-denial in this point, and thereby adds to the restraints upon pleasure and entertainments which this representation of things has suggested against them already.

Here, then, let us turn aside from this gay scene; and suffer me to take you with me for a moment to one

* Preached in *Lent*.

much fitter for your meditation. Let us go into the house of mourning, made so by such afflictions as have been brought in, merely by the common cross accidents and disasters to which our condition is exposed—where, perhaps, the aged parents sit broken-hearted, pierced to their souls with the folly and indiscretion of a thankless child—the child of their prayers, in whom all their hopes and expectations centered:—perhaps a more affecting scene—a virtuous family lying pinched with want, where the unfortunate support of it having long struggled with a train of misfortunes, and bravely fought up against them—is now piteously borne down at the last—overwhelmed with a cruel blow which no forecast or frugality could have prevented.—O GOD! look upon his afflictions—Behold him distracted with many sorrows, surrounded with the tender pledges of his love, and the partner of his cares—without bread to give them, unable, from the remembrance of better days, to dig;—to beg, ashamed.

When we enter into the house of mourning such as this—it is impossible to insult the unfortunate even with an improper look—Under whatever levity and dissipation of heart such objects catch our eyes,—they catch likewise our attentions, collect and call home our scatter'd thoughts, and exercise them with wisdom. A transient scene of distress, such as is here sketched, how soon does it furnish materials to set the mind at work? how necessarily does it engage it to the consideration of the miseries and misfortunes, the dangers and calamities to which the life of man is subject? By holding up such a glass before it, it forces the mind to see and reflect upon the vanity—the perishing condition and uncertain tenure of every thing in this world. From reflections of this serious cast, how insensibly do the thoughts carry us farther?—and from considering, what we are—what kind of world we live in, and what evils

befal us in it, how naturally do they set us to look forwards at what possibly we shall be?—for what kind of world we are intended—what evils may befall us there—and what provision we should make against them here, whilst we have time and opportunity.

If these lessons are so inseparable from the house of mourning here supposed—we shall find it a still more instructive school of wisdom when we take a view of the place in that more affecting light in which the wise man seems to confine it in the text, in which, by the house of mourning, I believe, he means that particular scene of sorrow, where there is lamentation and mourning for the dead.

Turn in hither, I beseech you, for a moment. Behold a dead man ready to be carried out, the only son of his mother, and she a widow. Perhaps a more affecting spectacle—a kind and indulgent father of a numerous family, lies breathless—snatched away in the strength of his age—torn in an evil hour from his children and the bosom of a disconsolate wife.

Behold much people of the city gathered together to mix their tears, with settled sorrow in their looks, going heavily along to the house of mourning, to perform that last melancholy office, which, when the debt of nature is paid, we are called upon to pay to each other.

If this sad occasion which leads him there, has not done it already, take notice, to what a serious and devout frame of mind every man is reduced, the moment he enters this gate of affliction. The busy and fluttering spirits, which in the house of mirth were wont to transport him from one diverting object to another—see how they are fallen! how peaceably they are laid! In this gloomy mansion full of shades and uncomfortable damps to seize the soul—see, the light and easy heart, which never knew what it was to think before, how pensive it is now, how soft, how suscep-

tible, how full of religious impressions, how deeply it is smitten with sense and with a love of virtue. Could we, in this crisis, whilst this empire of reason and religion lasts, and the heart is thus exercised with wisdom and busied with heavenly contemplations—could we see it naked as it is—stripped of its passions, unspotted by the world, and regardless of its pleasures—we might then safely rest our cause upon this single evidence, and appeal to the most sensual, whether Solomon has not made a just determination here, in favour of the house of mourning?—not for its own sake, but as it is fruitful in virtue, and becomes the occasion of so much good. Without this end, sorrow I own has no use but to shorten a man's days—nor can gravity, with all its studied solemnity of look and carriage, serve any end but to make one half of the world merry, and impose upon the other.

Consider what has been said, and may God of his mercy bless you! Amen.





Sermon ij. [vii.]

VINDICATION OF HUMAN NATURE.

“For none of us liveth to himself.”—ROMANS xiv. 7.

THERE is not a sentence in scripture, which strikes a narrow soul with greater astonishment;—and one might as easily engage to clear up the darkest problem in geometry to an ignorant mind, as make a sordid one comprehend the truth and reasonableness of this plain proposition—No man liveth to himself! Why?—Does any man live to any thing else?—In the whole compass of human life, can a prudent man steer to a safer point?—Not live to himself!—To whom then?—Can any interests or concerns which are foreign to a man’s self have such a claim over him, that he must serve under them,—suspend his own pursuits,—step out of his right course, till others have passed by him, and attained the several ends and purposes of living before him?

If, with a selfish heart, such an enquirer should happen to have a speculating head too, he will proceed, and ask you whether this same principle which the apostle here throws out of the life of man, is not in fact the grand bias of his nature?—That however we may flatter ourselves with fine-spun notions of dis-

interestedness and heroism in what we do ; were the most popular of our actions stripped naked, and the true motives and intentions of them searched to the bottom ; we should find little reason for triumph upon that score.—

In a word, he will say, that a man is altogether a bubble to himself in this matter, and that after all that can be said in his behalf, the truest definition that can be given of him is this, that he is a selfish animal ; and that all his actions have so strong a tincture of that character, as to shew (to whomever else he was intended to live) that in fact he lives only to himself.

Before I reply directly to this accusation, I cannot help observing by the way, that there is scarce any thing which has done more disservice to social virtue, than the frequent representations of human nature under this hideous picture of deformity, which, by leaving out all that is generous and friendly in the heart of man, has sunk him below the level of a brute, as if he was a composition of all that was mean-spirited and selfish. Surely, 'tis one step towards acting well, to think worthily of our nature ; and, as in common life the way to make a man honest, is, to suppose him so, and treat him as such ;—so here, to set some value upon ourselves, enables us to support the character, and even inspires and adds sentiments of generosity and virtue to those which we have already preconceived. The scripture tells, That God made man in his own image,—not surely in the sensitive and corporeal part of him, that could bear no resemblance with a pure and infinite Spirit—but what resemblance he bore was undoubtedly in the moral rectitude, and the kind and benevolent affections of his nature. And though the brightness of his image has been sullied greatly by the fall of man in our first parents, and the characters of it rendered still

less legible by the many superinductions of his own depraved appetites since,—yet 'tis a laudable pride and a true greatness of mind to cherish a belief, that there is so much of that glorious image still left upon it, as shall restrain him from base and disgraceful actions; to answer which end, what thought can be more conducive than that of our being made in the likeness of the greatest and best of Beings? This is a plain consequence. And the consideration of it should have in some measure been a protection to human nature, from the rough usage she has met with from the satirical pens of so many of the French writers, as well as of our own country, who with more wit than well meaning have desperately fallen foul upon the whole species, as a set of creatures incapable either of private friendship or public spirit, but just as the case suited their own interest and advantage.

That there is selfishness and meanness enough in the souls of one part of the world, to hurt the credit of the other part of it, is what I shall not dispute against; but to judge of the whole from this bad sample, and because one man is plotting and artful in his nature;—or, a second openly makes his pleasure or his profit the whole center of all his designs;—or because a third strait-hearted wretch sits confined within himself,—feels no misfortunes, but those which touch himself; to involve the whole race without mercy under such detested characters, is a conclusion as false as it is pernicious; and was it in general to gain credit, could serve no end, but the rooting out of our nature all that is generous, and planting in the stead of it such an aversion to each other, as must untie the bands of society, and rob us of one of the greatest pleasures of it, the mutual communications of kind offices; and by poisoning the fountain, rendering every thing suspected that flows through it.

To the honour of human nature, the scripture teaches

us, that GOD made man upright,—and though he has since found out many inventions, which have much dishonoured this noble structure, yet the foundation of it stands as it was,—the whole frame and design of it carried on upon social virtue and public spirit, and every member of us so evidently supported by this strong cement, that we may say with the apostle, *that no man liveth to himself*. In whatsoever light we view him, we shall see evidently, that there is no station or condition of his life,—no office or relation, or circumstance, but there arise from it so many ties, so many indispensable claims upon him, as must perpetually carry him beyond any selfish consideration, and shew plainly, that was a man foolishly wicked enough to design to live to himself alone, he would either find it impracticable, or he would lose, at least, the very thing which made life itself desirable. We know that our Creator, like an all-wise contriver, in this, as in all other of his works, has implanted in mankind such appetites and inclinations as were suitable for their state; that is, such as would naturally lead him to the love of society and friendship, without which he would have been found in a worse condition than the very beasts of the field. No one, therefore, who lives in society can be said to live to himself,—he lives to his God,—to his king, and his country.—He lives to his family, to his friends, to all under his trust, and in a word, he lives to the whole race of mankind; whatsoever has the character of man, and wears the same image of GOD that he does, is truly his brother, and has a just claim to his kindness.—That this is the case in fact, as well as in theory, may be made plain to any one who has made any observations upon human life.—When we have traced it through all its connections—viewed it under the several obligations which succeed each other in a perpetual rotation through the different stages

of a hasty pilgrimage, we shall find that these do operate so strongly upon it, and lay us justly under so many restraints, that we are every hour sacrificing something to society, in return for the benefits we receive from it.

To illustrate this, let us take a short survey of the life of any one man (not liable to great exceptions, but such a life as is common to most); let us examine it merely to this point, and try how far it will answer such a representation.

If we begin with him in that early age wherein the strongest marks of undisguised tenderness and disinterested compassion shew themselves—I might previously observe, with what impressions he is come out of the hands of God, with the very bias upon his nature, which prepares him for the character which he was designed to fulfil. But let us pass by the years which denote childhood, as no lawful evidence, you'll say, in this dispute; let us follow him to the period, when he is just got loose from tutors and governors, when his actions may be argued upon with less exception. If you observe, you will find that one of the first and leading propensities of his nature is that, which discovers itself in the desire of society, and the spontaneous love towards those of his kind. And though the natural wants and exigencies of his condition are, no doubt, one reason of this amiable impulse,—God having founded that in him as a provisional security to make him social;—yet though it is a reason in nature—'tis a reason to him yet undiscovered. Youth is not apt to philosophise so deeply—but follows,—as it feels itself prompted by the inward working of benevolence—without view to itself, or previous calculation either of the loss or profit which may accrue. Agreeably to this, observe how warmly, how heartily he enters into friendships—how disinterested, and unsuspecting in the choice of them,—how generous and

open in his professions!—how sincere and honest in making them good!—When his friend is in distress,—what lengths he will go,—what hazards he will bring upon himself,—what embarrassment upon his affairs to extricate and serve him! If man is altogether a selfish creature (as these moralizers would make him), 'tis certain he does not arrive at the full maturity of it in this time of his life.—No. If he deserves any accusation, 'tis in the other extreme, “That in his youth he is generally more FOOL than KNAVE,”—and so far from being suspected of living to himself, that he lives rather to every body else; the unconsciousness of art and design, in his own intentions, rendering him so utterly void of a suspicion of it in others, as to leave him too oft a bubble to every one who will take the advantage.—But you'll say, he soon abates of these transports of disinterested love; and as he grows older,—grows wiser, and learns to live more to himself.

Let us examine.—

That a longer knowledge of the world, and some experience of insincerity,—will teach him a lesson of more caution in the choice of friendships, and less forwardness in the undistinguished offers of his services, is what I grant. But if he cools of these, does he not grow warmer still in connections of a different kind? Follow him, I pray you, into the next stage of life, where he has entered into engagements, and appears as the father of a family, and you will see the passion still remains—the stream somewhat more confined,—but runs the stronger for it.—The same benevolence of heart altered only in its course, and the difference of objects towards which it tends. Take a short view of him in this light, as acting under the many tender claims which that relation lays upon him,—spending many weary days, and sleepless nights—

utterly forgetful of himself, intent only upon his family, and with an anxious heart contriving and labouring to preserve it from distress, against that hour when he shall be taken from its protection. Does such a one live to himself?—He who rises early, late takes rest, and eats the bread of carefulness, to save others the trouble of doing so after him? Does such a one live only to himself?—Ye, who are parents, answer this question for him. How oft have ye sacrificed your health,—your ease,—your pleasures,—nay, the very comforts of your lives, for the sake of your children?—How many indulgences have ye given up?—What self-denials, and difficulties have ye cheerfully undergone for them?—In their sickness, or reports of their misconduct, how have ye *gone on your way sorrowing*? What alarms within you, when fancy forebodes but imaginary misfortunes hanging over them?—but when real ones have overtaken them, *and mischief befallen them in the way in which they have gone*, how sharper than a sword have ye felt the workings of a parental kindness? In whatever period of human life we look for proofs of selfishness,—let us not seek them in this relation of a parent whose whole life, when truly known, is often little else but a succession of cares, heart-aches, and disquieting apprehensions, — enough to show that he is but an instrument in the hands of God to provide for the well-being of others, to serve their interest as well as his own.

If you try the truth of this reasoning upon every other part or situation of the same life, you will find it holds good in one degree or other. Take a view of it out of these closer connections both of a friend and parent.—Consider him for a moment under that natural alliance in which even a heathen poet has placed him; namely, that of a man;—and as such, to his honour,

as one incapable of standing unconcerned in whatever concerns his fellow-creatures.—Compassion has so great a share in our nature, and the miseries of this world are so constant an exercise of it, as to leave it in no one's power (who deserves the name of a man), in this respect, *to live to himself*.

He cannot stop his ears against the cries of the unfortunate.—The sad story of the fatherless and him that has no helper *must* be heard.—*The sorrowful sighing of the prisoners will come before him*; and a thousand other untold cases of distress to which the life of man is subject, find a way to his heart, let interest guide the passage as it will—*if he has this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, he will not be able to shut up his bowels of compassion from him*.

Let any man of common humanity look back upon his own life as subjected to these strong claims, and recollect the influence they have had upon him. How oft the mere impulses of generosity and compassion have led him out of his way?—In how many acts of charity and kindness, his fellow-feeling for others has made him forget himself?—In neighbourly offices, how oft he has acted against all considerations of profits, convenience, nay sometimes even of justice itself?—Let him add to this account, how much, in the progress of his life, has been given up even to the lesser obligations of civility and good manners?—What restraints they have laid him under? How large a portion of his time,—how much of his inclination and the plan of life he should most have wished, has from time to time been made a sacrifice to his good nature, and disinclination to give pain or disgust to others?

Whoever takes a view of the life of man in this glass wherein I have shewn it, will find it so beset and hemmed in with obligations of one kind or other, as to leave little room to suspect, that *man can live to himself*:

and so closely has our Creator linked us together (as well as all other parts of his works) for the preservation of that harmony in the frame and system of things which his wisdom has at first established,—that we find this bond of mutual dependence, however relaxed, is too strong to be broke : and I believe, that the most selfish men find it is so, and that they cannot, in fact, live so much to themselves, as the narrowness of their own hearts inclines them. If these reflections are just upon the moral relations in which we stand to each other, let us close the examination with a short reflection upon the great relation in which we stand to God.

The first and more natural thought on this subject, which at one time or other will thrust itself upon every man's mind, is this,—That there is a God who made me,—to whose gift I owe all the powers and faculties of my soul, to whose providence I owe all the blessings of my life, and by whose permission it is that I exercise and enjoy them ; that I am placed in this world as a creature of but a day, hastening to the place from whence I shall not return—That I am accountable for my conduct and behaviour to this great and wisest of Beings, before whose judgment-seat I must finally appear and receive the things done in my body,—whether they are good or whether they are bad.

Can any one doubt but the most inconsiderate of men sometimes sit down coolly, and make some such plain reflections as these upon their state and condition ?—or, that after they have made them, can one imagine, they lose all effect ?—As little appearance as there is of religion in the world, there is a great deal of its influence felt in its affairs—nor can one so root out the principles of it, but like nature they will return again, and give checks and interruptions to guilty pursuits. There are seasons, when the thoughts of a just God overlooking, and the terror of an after-reckoning, has

made the most determined tremble, and stop short in the execution of a wicked purpose ; and if we conceive that the worst of men lay some restraint upon themselves from the weight of this principle, what shall we think of the good and virtuous part of the world, who live under the perpetual influence of it,—who sacrifice their appetites and passions from a conscience of their duty to God ; and consider him as the object to whom they have dedicated their service, and make that the first principle, and ultimate end of all their actions ?—How many real and unaffected instances there are in the world of men thus governed, will not concern us so much to enquire, as to take care that we are of the number : which may God grant for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.





Sermon iii. [xvi.]

THE CHARACTER OF SHIMEI.

“But Abishai said, Shall not Shimei be put to death for this?”
—2 SAMUEL xix. 21, 1st part.

— I T has not a good aspect—This is the second time *Abishai* has proposed *Shimei's* destruction; once in the 16th chapter, on a sudden transport of indignation, when *Shimei* cursed David.—“*Why should this dead dog, cried Abishai, curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and cut off his head.*”——This had something at least of gallantry in it; for in doing it, he hazarded his own; and besides, the offender was not otherwise to be come at: the second time is in the text; when the offender was absolutely in their power——when the blood was cool; and the suppliant was holding up his hands for mercy.

—Shall not *Shimei*, answered *Abishai*, be put to death for this? So unrelenting a pursuit looks less like justice than revenge, which is so cowardly a passion, that it renders *Abishai's* first instance almost inconsistent with the second. I shall not endeavour to reconcile them; but confine the discourse simply to *Shimei*; and make such reflections upon his character as may be of use to society.

Upon the news of his son *Absalom's* conspiracy,

David had fled from Jerusalem, and from his own house, for safety : the representation given of the manner of it, is truly affecting :—never was a scene of sorrow so full of distress !

The king fled with all his household to save himself from the sword of the man he loved : he fled with all the marks of humble sorrow—“*with his head cover'd and barefoot ;*” and as he went by the ascent of mount Olivet, the sacred historian says, he wept—some glad-some scenes, perhaps, which there had pass'd—some hours of festivity he had shared with Absalom in better days, pressed tenderly upon nature, he wept at this sad vicissitude of things ;—and all the people that were with him, smitten with his affliction, *cover'd each man his head—weeping as he went up.*

It was on this occasion, when David had got to Bahurim, that Shimei the son of Gera, as we read in the 5th verse, came out :—was it with the choicest oils he could gather from mount Olivet, to pour into his wounds ?—Times and troubles had not done enough ; and thou camest out, Shimei, to add thy portion—

“*And as he came, he cursed David, and threw stones and cast dust at him ; and thus said Shimei, when he cursed : Go to, thou man of Belial, thou hast sought blood,—and behold thou art caught in thy own mischief ; for now hath the Lord returned upon thee all the blood of Saul and his house.*”

There is no small degree of malicious craft in fixing upon a season to give a mark of enmity and ill-will : a word,—a look, which at one time would make no impression—at another time wounds the heart ; and like a shaft flying with the wind, pierces deep, which, with its own natural force, would scarce have reached the object aimed at.

This seemed to have been Shimei's hopes : but excess of malice makes men too quicksighted even for

their own purpose. Could Shimei possibly have waited for the ebb of David's passions, and till the first great conflict within him had been over—then the reproach of being guilty of Saul's blood must have hurt him—his heart was possessed with other feelings—it bled for the deadly sting which Absalom had given him—he felt not the indignity of a stranger—"Behold my son Absalom, who came out of my bowels, seeketh my life—how much more may Shimei do it?—let him alone; it may be the Lord may look upon my affliction, and requite me good for this evil."

An injury unanswered in course grows weary of itself, and dies away in a voluntary remorse.

In bad dispositions capable of no restraint but fear—it has a different effect—the silent digestion of one wrong provokes a second.—He pursues him with the same invective; *and as David and his men went by the way, Shimei went along on the hill's side over against him; and cursed as he went, and cast dust at him.*

The insolence of base minds in success is boundless; and would scarce admit of a comparison, did not they themselves furnish us with one in the degrees of their abjection when evil returns upon them—the same poor heart which excites ungenerous tempers to triumph over a fallen adversary, in some instances seems to exalt them above the point of courage, sinks them in others even below cowardice.—Not unlike some little particles of matter struck off from the surface of the dirt by sunshine—dance and sport there whilst it lasts—but the moment 'tis withdrawn—they fall down—for dust they are—and unto dust they will return—whilst firmer and larger bodies preserve the stations which nature has assigned them, subjected to laws which no change of weather can alter.

This last did not seem to be Shimei's case; in all David's prosperity, there is no mention made of him—

he thrust himself forward into the circle, and possibly was number'd amongst friends and well-wishers.

When the scene changes, and David's troubles force him to leave his house in despair—Shimei is the first man we hear of, who comes out against him.

The wheel turns round once more; Absalom is cast down and David returns in peace—Shimei suits his behaviour to the occasion, and is the first man also who hastes to greet him—and had the wheel turn'd round a hundred times, Shimei, I dare say, in every period of its rotation, would have been uppermost.

O Shimei! would to Heaven when thou wast slain, that all thy family had been slain with thee; and not one of thy resemblance left! but ye have multiplied exceedingly and replenished the earth; and if I prophecy rightly—ye will in the end *subdue* it.

There is not a character in the world which has so bad an influence upon the affairs of it, as this of Shimei; whilst power meets with honest checks, and the evils of life with honest refuge, the world will never be undone: but thou, Shimei, hast sapp'd it at both extremes; for thou corruptest prosperity—and 'tis thou who hast broken the heart of poverty; and so long as worthless spirits can be ambitious ones, 'tis a character we shall never want. O! it infests the court—the camp—the cabinet—it infests the church—go where you will—in every quarter, in every profession, you see a Shimei following the wheels of the fortunate through thick mire and clay.—

—Haste, Shimei!—haste; or thou wilt be undone for ever—Shimei girdeth up his loins and speedeth after him—behold the hand which governs every thing,—takes the wheels from off his chariot, so that he who driveth, driveth on heavily—Shimei doubles his speed—but 'tis the contrary way; he flies like the wind over a sandy desert, and the place thereof shall know

it no more——stay, Shimei! 'tis your patron——your friend——your benefactor; 'tis the man who has raised you from the dunghill——'tis all one to Shimei: Shimei is the barometer of every man's fortune; marks the rise and fall of it, with all the variations from scorching hot to freezing cold upon his countenance, that the smile will admit of.——Is a cloud upon thy affairs?—see—it hangs over Shimei's brow——Hast *thou been* spoken for to the king or the captain of the host without success?——look not into the court-kalender——the vacancy is filled up in Shimei's face——Art thou in debt?—though not to Shimei—no matter——the worst officer of the law shall not be more insolent.

What then, Shimei, is the guilt of poverty so black—is it of so general a concern, that thou and all thy family must rise up as one man to reproach it?——when it lost every thing—did it lose the right to pity too? or did he who maketh poor as well as maketh rich, strip it of its natural powers to mollify the hearts and supple the temper of your race?—Trust me, ye have much to answer for; it is this treatment which it has ever met with from spirits like yours, which has gradually taught the world to look upon it as the greatest of evils, and shun it as the worst disgrace——and what is it, I beseech you——what is it that man will not do to keep clear of so sore an imputation and punishment?—is it not to fly from this, that *he rises early—late takes rest; and eats the bread of carefulness?*—that he plots, contrives—swears—lies—shuffles—puts on all shapes—tries all garments——wears them, with this, or that side outward——just as it favours his escape?

They who have considered our nature affirm, that shame and disgrace are two of the most insupportable evils of human life: the courage and spirits of many have mastered other misfortunes, and borne themselves

up against them ; but the wisest and best of souls have not been a match for these ; and we have many a tragical instance on record, what greater evils have been run into, merely to avoid this one.

Without this tax of infamy, poverty, with all the burdens it lays upon our flesh—so long as it is virtuous, could never break the spirits of a man ; all its hunger, and pain, and nakedness, are nothing to it, they have some counterpoise of good : and besides they are directed by Providence, and must be submitted to : but those are afflictions not from the hand of God or nature—“*for they do come forth of the DUST, and most properly may be said to spring out of the GROUND, and this is the reason they lay such stress upon our patience, —and in the end, create such a distrust of the world, as makes us look up—and pray, Let me fall into thy hands, O God ! but let me not fall into the hands of men.*”

Agreeable to this was the advice of Eliphaz to Job in the day of his distress——“*acquaint thyself, said he, now with God :*”——indeed his poverty seemed to have left him no other : the swords of the Sabeans had frightened them away——all but a few friends ; and of what kind they were, the very proverb, of *Job’s comforters*——says enough.

It is an instance which gives one great concern for human nature, “That a man, *who always wept* for him who was in *trouble ; —who never saw any perish for want of clothing ; —who never suffered the stranger to lodge in the street, but opened his door to the traveller ;*”——that a man of so good a character,——“*that he never caused the eyes of the widow to fail, —or had eaten his morsel by himself alone, and the fatherless had not eaten thereof ;*”——that such a man, the moment he fell into poverty, should have occasion to cry out for quarter,——*Have mercy upon me, O my friends ! for the hand of God has touched me.*——

Gentleness and humanity (one would think) would melt the hardest heart, and charm the fiercest spirit; bind up the most violent hand, and still the most abusive tongue;—but the experiment failed in a stronger instance of him, whose meat and drink it was to do us good; and in pursuit of which, whose whole life was a continued scene of kindness and of insults, for which we must go back to the same explanation with which we set out,—and that is, the scandal of poverty.——

“*This fellow, we know not whence he is*”——was the popular cry of one part; and with those who seemed to know better, the quere did not lessen the disgrace;—Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?—of Mary; great GOD of Israel! What!—of the meanest of thy people! (*for he had not regarded the low estate of his hand-maiden*)—and of the poorest, too (*for she had not a lamb to offer, but was purified as Moses directed in such a case, by the oblation of a turtle dove*).——

That the SAVIOUR of their nation could be poor, and not have where to lay his head,—was a crime never to be forgiven: and though the purity of his doctrine, and the works which he had done in its support, were stronger arguments on its side, than his humiliation could be against it,—yet the offence still remained;—they looked for the redemption of Israel; but they would have it only in those dreams of power which filled their imagination.——

Ye who weigh the worth of all things only in the goldsmith’s balance!—was this religion for you?—a religion whose appearance was not great and splendid,—but looked thin and meagre, and whose principles and promises shewed more like the curses of the law, than its blessings:—for they called for sufferings, and promised little but persecutions.

In truth, it is not easy for tribulation or distress, for nakedness or famine, to make many converts out of pride; or reconcile a worldly heart to the scorn and reproaches, which were sure to be the portion of every one who believed a mystery so discredited by the world, and so unpalatable to all its passions and pleasures.

But to bring this sermon to its proper conclusion.

If Astrea or Justice never finally took her leave of the world, till the day that poverty first became ridiculous, it is matter of consolation, that the God of Justice is ever over us;—that whatever outrages the lowness of our condition may be exposed to, from a mean and undiscerning world,——that we walk in the presence of the greatest and most generous of Beings, who is infinitely removed from cruelty and straitness of mind, and all those little and illiberal passions, with which we hourly insult each other.

The worst part of mankind are not always to be conquered—but if they are——’tis by the imitation of these qualities which must do it:—’tis true—as I’ve shewn——they may fail; but still all is not lost,——for if we conquer not the world——in the very attempts to do it, we shall at least conquer ourselves, and lay the foundation of our peace (where it ought to be) within our own hearts.





Sermon iv. [xvii.]

THE CASE OF HEZEKIAH AND THE
MESSENGERS.*

“And he said, What have they seen in thine house; and Hezekiah answered, All the things that are in my house have they seen; there is nothing amongst all my treasures that I have not shewn them.”—2 KINGS xx. 15.

—AND where was the harm, you’ll say, in all this?

“An eastern prince, the son of Baladine, had sent messengers with presents as far as from Babylon, to congratulate Hezekiah upon the recovery from his sickness; and Hezekiah, who was a good prince, acted consistently with himself: *he received and entertained the men, and hearkened unto them*, and before he sent them away, he courteously shewed them all that was worth a stranger’s curiosity in his house and his kingdom—and in this, seemed only to have discharged himself of what urbanity or the *etiquette* of courts might require.” Notwithstanding this, in the verse which immediately follows the text, we find he had done amiss; and as a punishment for it, that all his riches, which his forefathers had laid up in store unto that day, were threatened to be carried away in triumph to Babylon,—the very place from whence the messengers had come.

* Preached before his Excellency the Earl of HERTFORD, at Paris, 1763.

A hard return! and what his behaviour does not seem to have deserved. To set this matter in a clear light, it will be necessary to enlarge upon the whole story,—the reflections which will arise out of it, as we go along, may help us—at least, I hope they will be of use on their own account.

After the miraculous defeat of the Assyrians, we read in the beginning of this chapter, that Hezekiah was sick even unto death; and that God sends the prophet Isaiah, with the unwelcome message, *that he should set his house in order, for that he should die, and not live.*

There are many instances of men, who have received such news with the greatest ease of mind, and even entertained the thoughts of it with smiles upon their countenances,—and this, either from strength of spirits and the natural cheerfulness of their temper,—or that they knew the world, and cared not for it,—or expected a better—yet thousands of good men, with all the helps of philosophy, and against all the assurances of a well-spent life, that the change must be to their account,—upon the approach of death have still lean'd towards this world, and wanted spirits and resolution to bear the shock of a separation from it for ever.

This, in some measure, seemed to have been Hezekiah's case; for tho' he had walked before God in truth, and with a perfect heart, and had done that which was good in his sight,—yet we find that the hasty summons afflicted him greatly;—that upon the delivery of the message he wept sore;—that he turned his face towards the wall,—perhaps for the greater secrecy of his devotion, and that, by withdrawing himself thus from all external objects, he might offer up his prayer unto his God, with greater and more fervent attention.

—And he pray'd, and said, O LORD! I beseech

thee remember——O Hezekiah ! How couldst thou fear that God had forgotten thee ? or, how couldst thou doubt of his remembrance of thy integrity, when he call'd thee to receive its recompence ?

But here it appears of what materials man is made : he pursues happiness——and yet is so content with misery, that he would wander for ever in this dark vale of it,——and say, "*It is good, Lord ! to be here, and to build tabernacles of rest ;*" and so long as we are clothed with flesh, and nature has so great a share within us, it is no wonder if that part claims its right, and pleads for the sweetness of life, notwithstanding all its care and disappointments.

This natural weakness, no doubt, had its weight in Hezekiah's earnest prayer for life ; and yet from the success it met with, and the immediate change of God's purpose thereupon, it is hard to imagine, but that it must have been accompanied with some meritorious and more generous motive ; and if we suppose, as some have done, that he turned his face towards the wall, because that part of his chamber looked towards the temple, the care of whose preservation lay next his heart, we may consistently enough give this sense to his prayer.

"O God ! remember how I have walked before thee in truth ;——how much I have done to rescue thy religion from error and falsehood ;——thou knowest that the eyes of the world are fixed upon me, as one that hath forsaken their idolatry, and restored thy worship ;——that I stand in the midst of a crooked and corrupt generation, which looks thro' all my actions, and watches all events which happen to me : if now they shall see me snatched away in the midst of my days and service, how will thy great name suffer in my extinction ? Will not the heathen say, This it is to serve the God of Israel !——How faithfully did

Hezekiah walk before him?—What enemies did he bring upon himself, in too warmly promoting his worship? and now when the hour of sickness and distress came upon him, and he most wanted the aid of his God:—behold how he was forsaken!”

It is not unreasonable to ascribe some such pious and more disinterested motive to Hezekiah's desire of life, from the issue and success of his prayer:—*for it came to pass, before Isaiah had gone out into the middle court, that the word of the Lord came to him, saying, Turn again and tell Hezekiah I have heard his prayer, I have seen his tears; and behold I will heal him.*

It was upon this occasion, as we read in the 12th verse of this chapter, that Baradock-baladan, son of Baladine king of Babylon, sent letters and a present unto Hezekiah: he had heard the fame of his sickness and recovery; for as the Chaldeans were great searchers into the secrets of nature, especially into the motions of the celestial bodies, in all probability they had taken notice, at that distance, of the strange appearance of the shadow's returning ten degrees backwards upon their dials, and had inquired and learned upon what account, and in whose favour, such a sign was given; so that this astronomical miracle, besides the political motive which it would suggest of courting such a favourite of heaven, had been sufficient by itself to have led a curious people as far as Jerusalem, that they might see the man for whose sake the Sun had forsook his course.

And here we see how hard it is to stand the shock of prosperity, and how much truer a proof we give of our strength in that extreme of life, than in the other.

In all the trials of adversity, we find that Hezekiah behaved well,—nothing unmanned him: when besieged by the Assyrian host, which shut him up in Jerusalem, and threatened his destruction,—he stood

unshaken, and depended upon God's succour.—When cast down upon his bed of sickness, and threatened with death, he meekly turn'd his face towards the wall,—wept and prayed, and depended upon God's mercy :—but no sooner does prosperity return upon him, and the messengers from a far country come to pay the flattering homage due to his greatness, and the extraordinary felicity of his life, but he turns giddy, and sinks under the weight of his good fortune, and with a transport unbecoming a wise man upon it, 'tis said, he hearken'd unto the men, and shew'd them all the house of his precious things, the silver and the gold, the spices and the precious ointments, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures ; that there was nothing in his house, nor in his dominions, that Hezekiah shew'd them not ; for tho' it is not expressly said here (tho' it is in the parallel passage in Chronicles),—nor is he charged by the prophet that he did this out of vanity and a weak transport of ostentation ;—yet as we are sure God could not be offended but where there was a real crime, we might reasonably conclude that this was his, and that he who searches into the heart of man, beheld that his was corrupted with the blessings he had given him, and that it was just to make what was the occasion of his pride, become the instrument of his punishment, by decreeing, that all the riches he had laid up in store until that day, should be carried away in triumph to Babylon, the very place from whence the messengers had come who had been eye-witnesses of his folly.

“O Hezekiah ! how couldst thou provoke God to bring this judgment upon thee ? How could thy spirit, all-meek and gentle as it was, have ever fallen into this snare ? Were thy treasures rich as the earth—What ! was thy heart so vain as to be lifted up therewith ? Was not all that was valuable in the world—nay, was

not heaven itself almost at thy command whilst thou wast humble? and, How was it, that thou couldst barter away all this, for what was lighter than a bubble, and desecrate an action so full of courtesy and kindness as thine appeared to be, by suffering it to take its rise from so polluted a fountain?"

There is scarce any thing which the heart more unwillingly bears, than an analysis of this kind.

We are a strange compound; and something foreign from what charity would suspect, so eternally twists itself into what we do, that not only in momentous concerns, where interest lists under it all the powers of disguise,—but even in the most indifferent of our actions—not worth a fallacy——by force of habit, we continue it: so that whatever a man is about,——observe him,——he stands arm'd inside and out with two motives; an ostensible one for the world,——and another which he reserves for his own private use;—this, you may say, the world has no concern with: it might have been so; but by obtruding the wrong motive upon the world, and stealing from it a character, instead of winning one;——we give it a right, and a temptation along with it, to inquire into the affair.

The motives of the one for doing it, are often little better than the others for deserving it. Let us see if some social virtue may not be extracted from the errors of both the one and the other.

VANITY bids all her sons to be generous and brave,——and her daughters to be chaste and courteous.——But why do we want her instructions?——Ask the comedian who is taught a part he feels not——

Is it that the principles of religion want strength, or that the real passion for what is good and worthy will not carry us high enough?——God! thou knowest they carry us too high——we want not *to be*——but *to seem*——

Look out of your door,—take notice of that man : see what disquieting, intriguing, and shifting, he is content to go through, merely to be thought a man of plain-dealing :—three grains of honesty would save him all this trouble.—alas ! he has them not.—

Behold a second, under a show of piety hiding the impurities of a debauched life :—he is just entering the house of God :—would he was more pure—or less pious :—but then he could not gain his point.

Observe a third going on almost in the same track, with what an inflexible sanctity of deportment he sustains himself as he advances :—every line in his face writes abstinence ;—every stride looks like a check upon his desires : see, I beseech you, how he is cloak'd up with sermons, prayers, and sacraments ; and so bemuffled with the externals of religion, that he has not a hand to spare for a worldly purpose ;—he has armour at least—Why does he put it on ? Is there no serving God without all this ? Must the garb of religion be extended so wide to the danger of its rending ?—Yes truly, or it will not hide the secret—and, What is that ?

—That the saint has no religion at all.

—But here comes GENEROSITY ; giving—not to a decayed artist—but to the arts and sciences themselves.—See,—*he builds not a chamber in the wall apart for the prophet* ; but whole schools and colleges for those who come after. LORD ! how they will magnify his name !—'tis in capitals already ; the first—the highest, in the gilded rent-roll of every hospital and asylum.—

—One honest tear shed in private over the unfortunate, is worth it all.

What a problematic set of creatures does simulation make us ! Who would divine, that all that anxiety and concern, so visible in the airs of one half of that

great assembly, should arise from nothing else, but that the other half of it may think them to be men of consequence, penetration, parts, and conduct?—What a noise amongst the claimants about it! Behold *Humility*, out of mere pride,—and honesty, almost out of knavery:—*Chastity*, never once in harm's way,—and courage, like a Spanish soldier upon an Italian stage—a bladder full of wind.—

—Hark! that, the sound of that trumpet,—let not my soldier run,—'tis some good Christian giving alms. O, PITY, thou gentlest of human passions! soft and tender are thy notes, and ill accord they with so loud an instrument.

Thus something jars, and will for ever jar in these cases: imposture is all dissonance, let what master soever of it undertake the part; let him harmonise and modulate it as he may, one tone will contradict another; and whilst we have ears to hear, we shall distinguish it; 'tis truth only which is consistent and ever in harmony with itself: it sits upon our lips, like the natural notes of some melodies, ready to drop out, whether we will or no;—it racks no invention to let ourselves alone, and needs fear no critic, to have the same excellency in the heart, which appears in the action.

It is a pleasing allusion the Scripture makes use of in calling us sometimes a house, and sometimes a temple, according to the more or less exalted qualities of the spiritual guest which is lodged within us: whether this is the precise ground of the distinction, I will not affirm; but thus much may be said, that, if we are to be temples, 'tis truth and singleness of heart which must make the dedication: 'tis this which must first distinguish them from the unhallowed pile, where dirty tricks and impositions are practised by the host upon the traveller, who tarries but for a moment, and returns not again.

We all take notice, how close and reserved people are; but we do not take notice, at the same time, that every one may have something to conceal, as well as ourselves; and that we are only marking the distances and taking the measures of self-defence from each other in the very instances we complain of: this is so true, that there is scarce any character so rare, as a man of real open and generous integrity—who carries his heart in his hand,—who says the thing he thinks, and does the thing he pretends. Though no one can dislike the character,—yet, discretion generally shakes her head,—and the world soon lets him into the reason.

“O that I had in the wilderness a lodging of way-faring men! that I might leave such a people, and go from them.” Where is the man of a nice sense of truth and strong feelings, from whom the duplicity of the world has not at one time or other wrung the same wish; and where lies the wilderness to which some one has not fled, from the same melancholy impulse?

Thus much for those who give occasion to be thought ill of;—let us say a word or two unto those who take it.

But to avoid all common-place cant as much as I can on this head,—I will forbear to say, because I do not think it, that 'tis a breach of Christian charity to think or speak ill of our neighbour, &c.

—We cannot avoid it: our opinions must follow the evidence; and we are perpetually in such engagements and situations, that 'tis our duties to speak what our opinions are—but God forbid that this ever should be done but from its best motive—the sense of what is due to virtue, governed by discretion and the utmost fellow-feeling: were we to go on otherwise, beginning with the great broad cloak of hypocrisy,

and so down through all its little trimmings and facings, tearing away without mercy all that look'd seemly,——we should leave but a tatter'd world of it.

But I confine what I have to say to a character less equivocal, and which takes up too much room in the world: it is that of those, who from a general distrust of all that looks disinterested, finding nothing to blame in an action, and perhaps much to admire in it,——immediately fall foul upon its motives: *Does Job serve God for nought?* What a vile insinuation! Besides, the question was not, whether Job was a rich man or a poor man?—but, whether he was a man of integrity or no? and the appearances were strong on his side: indeed it might have been otherwise; it was possible Job might be insincere, and the devil took the advantage of the die for it.

It is a bad picture, and done by a terrible master, and yet we are always copying it. Does a man from real conviction of heart forsake his vices?—the position is not to be allowed,——no; his vices have forsaken him.

Does a pure virgin fear God and say her prayers?——she is in her climacteric.

Does humanity clothe and educate the unknown orphan?——Poverty! thou hast no genealogies:——See! is he not the father of the child? Thus do we rob heroes of the best part of their glory—their virtue. Take away the motive of the act, you take away all that is worth having in it;—wrest it to ungenerous ends, you load the virtuous man who did it with infamy;——undo it all—I beseech you: give him back his honour,——restore the jewel you have taken from him—replace him in the eye of the world—

——it is too late.

It is painful to utter the reproaches which should come in here.—I will trust them with yourselves: in coming from that quarter, they will more naturally produce such fruits as will not set your teeth on edge—for they will be the fruits of love and good-will, to the praise of God and the happiness of the world, which I wish.





Sermon v. [xviii.]

THE LEVITE AND HIS CONCUBINE.

“And it came to pass in those days, when there was no king in Israel, that there was a certain Levite sojourning on the side of Mount Ephraim, who took unto him a concubine.”—JUDGES xix. 1, 2, 3.

—A CONCUBINE!—but the text accounts for it, *for in those days there was no king in Israel*, and the Levite, you will say, like every other man in it, did what was right in his own eyes,—and so, you may add, did his concubine too,—*for she played the whore against him, and went away.*—

—Then shame and grief go with her, and wherever she seeks a shelter, may the hand of justice shut the door against her!—

Not so; for she went unto her father's house in Bethlehem-judah, and was with him four whole months.

—Blessed interval for meditation upon the fickleness and vanity of this world and its pleasures! I see the holy man upon his knees,——with hands compressed to his bosom, and with uplifted eyes, thanking heaven, that the object which had so long shared his affections, was fled.——

The text gives a different picture of his situation; *for he arose and went after her to speak friendly to her, and to bring her back again, having his servant with him,*

and a couple of asses : and she brought him unto her father's house ; and when the father of the damsel saw him, he rejoiced to meet him—

——A most sentimental group ! you'll say : and so it is, my good commentator, the world talks of every thing : give but the outlines of a story,——let *Spleen* or *Prudery* snatch the pencil, and they will finish it with so many hard strokes, and with so dirty a colouring, that *Candour* and *Courtesy* will sit in torture as they look at it.—Gentle and virtuous spirits ! ye who know not what it is to be rigid interpreters, but of your own failings,——to you I address myself, the unhired advocates for the conduct of the misguided,——whence is it, that the world is not more jealous of your office ? How often must ye repeat it, “That such a one's doing so or so”——is not sufficient evidence by itself to overthrow the accused ? That our actions stand surrounded with a thousand circumstances which do not present themselves at first sight :——that the first springs and motives which impell'd the unfortunate, lie deeper still ;——and, that of the millions which every hour are arraign'd, thousands of them may have err'd merely from the *head*, and been actually outwitted into evil ; and even when from the heart,——that the difficulties and temptations under which they acted,——the force of the passions,——the suitableness of the object, and the many struggles of virtue before she fell,——may be so many appeals from justice to the judgment-seat of pity.

Here then let us stop a moment, and give the story of the Levite and his concubine a second hearing : like all others, much of it depends upon the telling ; and as the Scripture has left us no kind of comment upon it, 'tis a story on which the heart cannot be at a loss for what to say, or the imagination for what to suppose——the danger is, humanity may say too much.

And it came to pass in those days, when there was no king in Israel, that a certain Levite sojourning on the side of Mount Ephraim, took unto himself a Concubine.——

O Abraham, thou father of the faithful ! if this was wrong,——Why didst thou set so ensnaring an example before the eyes of thy descendants ? and, Why did the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and Jacob, bless so often the seed of such intercourses, and promise to multiply and make princes come out of them ?

God can dispense with his own laws : and accordingly we find the holiest of the patriarchs, and others in Scripture, whose hearts cleaved most unto God, accommodating themselves as well as they could to the dispensation : that Abraham had Hagar ;——that Jacob, besides his two wives, Rachael and Leah, took also unto him Zilpah and Bilhah, from whom many of the tribes descended : that David had seven wives and ten concubines ;——Rehoboam, sixty ;——and that, in whatever cases it became reproachable, it seemed not so much the thing itself, as the abuse of it, which made it so : this was remarkable in that of Solomon, whose excess became an insult upon the privileges of mankind ; for by the same plan of luxury, which made it necessary to have forty thousand stalls of horses,—he had unfortunately miscalculated his other wants, and so had seven hundred wives, and three hundred concubines.

Wise——deluded man ! was it not that thou madest some amends for thy bad practice, by thy good preaching, what had become of thee !——three hundred——but let us turn aside, I beseech you, from so sad a stumbling-block.

The Levite had but one. The Hebrew word imports a woman a concubine, or a wife a concubine, to distinguish her from the more infamous species, who came under the roofs of the licentious without principle. Our annotators tell us, that in Jewish *æconomicks*, these

differ'd little from the wife, except in some outward ceremonies and stipulations, but agreed with her, in all the true essences of marriage, and gave themselves up to the husband (for so he is call'd), with faith plighted, with sentiments, and with affection.

Such a one the Levite wanted to share his solitude, and fill up that uncomfortable blank in the heart in such a situation; for notwithstanding all we meet with in books, in many of which, no doubt, there are a good many handsome things said upon the sweets of retirement, &c. . . . yet still "*it is not good for man to be alone:*" nor can all which the cold-hearted pedant stuns our ears with upon the subject, ever give one answer of satisfaction to the mind; in the midst of the loudest vauntings of philosophy, Nature will have her yearnings for society and friendship;—a good heart wants some object to be kind to—and the best parts of our blood, and the purest of our spirits, suffer most under the destitution.

Let the torpid monk seek heaven comfortless and alone.—God speed him! For my own part, I fear, I should never so find the way: let me be wise and religious—but let me be man: wherever thy Providence places me, or whatever be the road I take to get to thee—give me some companion in my journey, be it only to remark to, How our shadows lengthen as the sun goes down;—to whom I may say, How fresh is the face of nature! How sweet the flowers of the field! How delicious are these fruits!

Alas! with bitter herbs, like his passover, did the Levite eat them: for as they thus walked the path of life together,—she wantonly turn'd aside unto another, and fled from him.

It is the mild and quiet half of the world, who are generally outraged and borne down by the other half of it: but in this they have the advantage; whatever be the

sense of their wrongs, that pride stands not so watchful a centinel over their forgiveness, as it does in the breasts of the fierce and froward : we should all of us, I believe, be more forgiving than we are, would the world but give us leave ; but it is apt to interpose its ill-office in remissions, especially of this kind : the truth is, it has its laws, to which the heart is not always a party ; and acts so like an unfeeling engine in all cases without distinction, that it requires all the firmness of the most settled humanity to bear up against it.

Many a bitter conflict would the Levite have to sustain with himself—his Concubine——and the sentiments of his tribe, upon the wrong done him :——much matter for pleading—and many an embarrassing account on all sides : in a period of four whole months, every passion would take its empire by turns ; and in the ebbs and flows of the less unfriendly ones, PITY would find some moments to be heard——RELIGION herself would not be silent,——CHARITY would have much to say,—and thus attun'd, every object he beheld on the borders of mount Ephraim,——every grot and grove he pass'd by, would solicit the recollection of former kindness, and awaken an advocate in her behalf more powerful than them all.

“ I grant——I grant it all ”——he would cry,—“ 'tis foul ! 'tis faithless !——but, Why is the door of mercy to be shut for ever against it ? and, Why is it to be the only sad crime that the injured may not remit, or reason or imagination pass over without a scar ?——Is it the blackest ? In what catalogue of human offences is it so marked ? or, Is it, that of all others 'tis a blow most grievous to be endured ?——the heart cries out, It is so : but let me ask my own, What passions are they which give edge and force to this weapon which has struck me ? and, whether it is not my own pride, as much as my virtues, which at this moment excite

the greatest part of that intolerable anguish in the wound which I am laying to her charge? But, merciful heaven, was it otherwise, why is an unhappy creature of thine to be persecuted by me with so much cruel revenge and rancorous despite as my first transport called for? Have faults no extenuations?—Makes it nothing, that when the trespass was committed, she forsook the partner of her guilt, and fled directly to her father's house? And is there no difference betwixt one propensely going out of the road and continuing there, through depravity of will—and a hapless wanderer straying by delusion, and warily treading back her steps?—Sweet is the look of sorrow for an offence, in a heart determined never to commit it more!—Upon that altar only could I offer up my wrongs. Cruel is the punishment which an ingenuous mind will take upon itself, from the remorse of so hard a trespass against me,—and if that will not balance the account,—just God! let me forgive the rest. Mercy well becomes the heart of all thy creatures,—but most of thy servant, a Levite, who offers up so many daily sacrifices to thee, for the transgressions of thy people.—

—“But to little purpose,” he would add, “have I served at thy altar, where my business was to sue for mercy, had I not learn'd to practise it.”

Peace and happiness rest upon the head and heart of every man who can thus think.

So he arose, and went after her, to speak friendly to her—in the original—“to speak to her heart;”—to apply to their former endearments,—and to ask, How she could be so unkind to him, and so very unkind to herself?—

—Even the upbraidings of the quiet and relenting are sweet: not like the strivings of the fierce and inexorable, who bite and devour all who have thwarted them in their way;—but they are calm and courteous,

like the spirit which watches over their character: How could such a temper woo the damsel, and not bring her back? or, How could the father of the damsel, in such a scene, have a heart open to any impressions but those mentioned in the text;——
That when he saw him, he rejoiced to meet him;——
urged his stay from day to day, with that most irresistible of all invitations,—“*Comfort thy heart, and tarry all night, and let thine heart be merry.*”

If *Mercy* and *Truth* thus met together in settling this account, *Love* would surely be of the party: great—great is its power in cementing what has been broken, and wiping out wrongs even from the memory itself: and so it was—for the Levite arose up, and with him his Concubine and his servant, and they departed.

It serves no purpose to pursue the story further; the catastrophe is horrid, and would lead us beyond the particular purpose for which I have enlarged upon thus much of it, and that is, to discredit rash judgment, and illustrate from the manner of conducting this drama, the courtesy which the *dramatis personæ* of every other piece may have a right to. Almost one half of our time is spent in telling and hearing evil of one another—some unfortunate knight is always upon the stage—and every hour brings forth something strange and terrible to fill up our discourse and our astonishment, “How people can be so foolish!”——and ’tis well if the compliment ends there; so that there is not a social virtue for which there is so constant a demand,—or, consequently, so well worth cultivating, as that which opposes this unfriendly current—many and rapid are the springs which feed it, and various and sudden, God knows, are the guests which render it unsafe to us in this short passage of our life: let us make the discourse as serviceable as we can, by tracing some of the most remarkable of them up to their source.

And, first, there is one miserable inlet to this evil, and which, by the way, if speculation is supposed to precede practice, may have been derived, for aught I know, from some of our busiest inquirers after nature,—and that is, when with more zeal than knowledge we account for phenomena, before we are sure of their existence.—*It is not the manner of the Romans to condemn any man to death* (much less to be martyr'd), said Festus;—*and doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doth?* cried Nicodemus; *and he that answereth or determineth, a matter before he has heard it,*—*it is folly and a shame unto him.*—We are generally in such a haste to make our own decrees, that we pass over the justice of these,—and then the scene is so changed by it, that 'tis our folly only which is real, and that of the accused, which is imaginary; through too much precipitancy it will happen so; and then the jest is spoil'd—or we have criticised our own shadow.

A second way is, when the process goes on more orderly, and we begin with getting information,—but do it from those suspected evidences, against which our SAVIOUR warns us, when he bids us “*not to judge according to appearance:*”——in truth, 'tis behind these that most of the things which blind human judgment lie concealed,—and, on the contrary, there are many things which appear to be,—which are not:—*Christ came eating and drinking,—behold a wine-bibber!*——he sat with sinners—he was their friend:——in many cases of which kind, *Truth*, like a modest matron, scorns art—and disdains to press herself forwards into the circle to be seen;——ground sufficient for *Suspicion* to draw up the libel——for *Malice* to give the torture,—or rash *Judgment* to start up and pass a final sentence.

A third way is, when the facts which denote mi^e

conduct are less disputable, but are commented upon with an asperity of censure, which a humane or a gracious temper would spare: an abhorrence against what is criminal, is so fair a plea for this, and looks so like virtue in the face, that in a sermon against rash judgment, it would be unseasonable to call it in question,——and yet, I declare, in the fullest torrent of exclamations which the guilty can deserve, that the simple apostrophe, “who made me to differ? why was not I an example?” would touch my heart more, and give me a better earnest of the commentators,—than the most corrosive period you could add. The punishment of the unhappy, I fear, is enough without it——and were it not,——’tis piteous, the tongue of a Christian, whose religion is all candour and courtesy, should be made the executioner. We find in the discourse between Abraham and the rich man, though the one was in heaven, and the other in hell, yet still the patriarch treated him with mild language:—*Son! Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime, &c. &c.*——and in the dispute about the body of Moses, between the Archangel and the devil (himself), St Jude tells us, he durst not bring a railing accusation against him;—’twas unworthy his high character,——and, indeed, might have been impolitic too; for if he had (as one of our divines notes upon the passage), the devil had been too hard for him at railing,——’twas his own weapon,——and the basest spirits, after his example, are the most expert at it.

This leads me to the observation of a fourth cruel inlet to this evil, and that is, the desire of being thought men of wit and parts, and the vain expectation of coming honestly by the title, by shrewd and sarcastic reflections upon whatever is done in the world. This is setting up trade upon the broken stock of other people’s failings,—perhaps their misfortunes:——so,

much good may't do them with what honour they can get,—the furthest extent of which, I think, is, to be praised, as we do some saucers, with tears in our eyes: It is a commerce most illiberal; and as it requires no vast capital, too many embark in it, and so long as there are bad passions to be gratified,—and bad heads to judge, with such it may pass for wit, or at least, like some vile relation, whom all the family is ashamed of, claim kindred with it, even in better companies. Whatever be the degree of its affinity, it has helped to give wit a bad name, as if the main offence of it was satire: certainly there is a difference between *Bitterness* and *Saltiness*,—that is,——between the malignity and the festivity of wit,——the one is a mere quickness of apprehension, void of humanity,—and is a talent of the devil; the other comes down from the Father of spirits, so pure and abstracted from persons, that willingly it hurts no man: or if it touches upon an in *forum*, 'tis with that dexterity of true genius, which ~~ould have him~~ rather to give a new colour to the absurd than to ~~pass~~ pass.—He may smile at the shape, ~~sm who~~ raised to another's fame,——but ~~th~~ a discerning wit will level it at once with the ground, his ~~fold~~ fold his own upon the ruins of it.—

What then, ye rash censurers of ~~at. the~~ world! Have ye no mansions for your credit, but those from whence ye have extruded the right owners? Are there no regions for you to shine in, that ye descend for it into the low caverns of abuse and crimination? Have ye no seats—but those of the scornful to sit down in? If *Honour* has mistook his road, or the *Virtues*, in their excesses, have approached too near the confines of VICE, are they therefore to be cast down the precipice? Must BEAUTY for ever be trampled upon in the dirt for one——one false step? And shall no one virtue or good quality, out of the thousand the fair penitent may have

left,——shall not one of them be suffered to stand by her?——Just God of Heaven and earth !

——But thou art merciful, loving, and righteous, and lookest down with pity upon these wrongs thy servants do unto each other : pardon us, we beseech thee, for them, and all our transgressions ; let it not be remember'd, that we were brethren of the same flesh, the same feelings and infirmities. O my GOD ! write it not down in thy book, that thou madest us merciful after thy own image ;——that thou hast given us a religion so courteous,——so good temper'd,——that every precept of it carries a balm along with it to heal the soreness of our natures, and sweeten our spirits, that we might live with such kind intercourse in this world, as will fit us to exist together in a better.

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Sermon vi. [xix.]

FELIX'S BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS PAUL, EXAMINED.

"He hoped also, that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him."—ACTS xxiv. 26.

A NOBLE object to take up the consideration of the Roman governor!

——"*He hoped that money should have been given him!*"——for what end? to enable him to judge betwixt right and wrong!——and, From whence was it to be wrung? from the poor scrip of a disciple of the carpenter's son, who left nothing to his followers but poverty and sufferings.——

And was this Felix!——the great, the noble Felix!——Felix the happy!——the gallant Felix, who kept Drusilla!——Could he do this?——base passion! What canst thou not make us do?

Let us consider the whole transaction.

Paul, in the beginning of this chapter, had been accused before Felix, by Tertullus, of very grievous crimes,——of being a pestilent fellow——a mover of seditions, and a profaner of the temple, &c.——To which accusations, the apostle having liberty from Felix to reply, he makes his defence from the 10th to the 22d verse to this purport. He shews him, first,

that the whole charge was destitute of all proof; which he openly challenges them to produce against him, if they had it;—that, on the contrary, he was so far from being the man Tertullus had represented, that the very principles of the religion with which he then stood charged,——and which they called Heresy, led him to be the most unexceptionable in his conduct, by the continual exercise which it demanded of him, of having a conscience void of offence at all times, both towards God and man; that consistently with this, his adversaries had neither found him in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogue, or in the city,——for this he appeals to themselves:——that it was but twelve days since he came up to Jerusalem for to worship:——that, during that time, when he purified in the temple, he did it as became him, without noise, without tumult: this he calls upon the Jews who came from Asia, and were eye-witnesses of his behaviour, to attest;——and, in a word, he urges the whole defence before Felix in so strong a manner, and with such plain and natural arguments of his innocence, as to leave no colour for his adversaries to reply.

There was, however, still one adversary in this court,——though silent, yet not satisfied.——

—Spare thy eloquence, Tertullus! roll up the charge: a more notable orator than thyself is risen up, ——'tis *AVARICE*, and that too in the most fatal place for the prisoner it could have taken possession of, ——'tis in the heart of the man who judges him.

If Felix believed Paul innocent, and acted accordingly——(that is) released him without reward,——this subtle advocate told him he would lose one of the profits of his employment——and if he acknowledged the faith of *CHRIST*, which Paul occasionally explained in his defence,——it told him, he might lose the

employment itself;—so that notwithstanding the character of the apostle appeared (as it was) most spotless, and the faith he professed so very clear, that as he urged it, the heart gave its consent,—yet, at the same time, the passions rebell'd, and so strong an interest was formed thereby, against the first impressions in favour of the man and his cause, that both were dismissed;—the one to a more convenient hearing, which never came; the other to the hardships of a prison for two whole years,—hoping, as the text informs us, that money should have been given him; and even at the last, when he left the province, willing to do the Jews a pleasure,—that is,—to serve his interest in another shape, with all the conviction upon his mind, that he had done nothing worthy of bonds, he, nevertheless, left the holy man bound, and consigned over to the hopeless prospect of ending his days in the same state of confinement, in which he had ungenerously left him.

One would imagine, as covetousness is a vice not naturally cruel in itself, that there must certainly have been a mixture of other motives in the governor's breast, to account for a proceeding so contrary to humanity and his own conviction; and could it be of use to raise conjectures upon it, there seems but too probable grounds for such a supposition. It seems that Drusilla, whose curiosity, upon a double account, had led her to hear Paul,—(for she was a daughter of Abraham—as well as of Eve)—was a character which might have figured very well even in our own times; for, as Josephus tells us, she had left the Jew her husband, and without any pretence in their law to justify a divorce, had given herself up without ceremony to Felix, for which cause, though she is here called his wife, she was, in reason and justice, the wife of another man,—and consequently lived in an open state

of adultery. So that when Paul, in explaining the faith of CHRIST, took occasion to argue upon the morality of the Gospel,—and urged the eternal laws of justice, the unchangeable obligations to temperance, of which chastity was a branch,—it was scarce possible to frame his discourse so (had he wished to temporize), but that either her interest or her love must have taken offence: and though we do not read, like Felix, that she trembled at the account, 'tis yet natural to imagine she was affected with other passions, of which the apostle might feel the effects—and 'twas well he suffered no more, if two such violent enemies as lust and avarice were combined against him.

But this by the way—for as the text seems only to acknowledge one of these motives, it is not our business to assign the other.

It is observable, that this same apostle, speaking, in the epistle to Timothy, of the ill effects of this same ruling passion, affirms, that it is the root of all evil; and I make no doubt but the remembrance of his own sufferings had no small share in the severity of the reflection.—Infinite are the examples, where the love of money is only a subordinate and ministerial passion, exercised for the support of some other vices: and 'tis generally found, when there is either ambition, prodigality, or lust, to be fed by it, that it then rages with the least mercy and discretion; in which cases, strictly speaking, it is not the root of other evils, but other evils are the root of it.

This forces me to recal what I have said upon covetousness, as a vice not naturally cruel: it is not apt to represent itself to our imaginations, at first sight, under that idea; we consider it only as a mean, worthless turn of mind, incapable of judging or doing what is right: but as it is a vice which does not always set

up for itself,—to know truly what it is in this respect, we must know what masters it serves;—they are many, and of various casts and humours,—and each one lends it something of its own complexional tint and character.

This, I suppose, may be the cause that there is a greater and more whimsical mystery in the love of money, than in the darkest and most nonsensical problem that ever was pored on.

Even at the best, and when the passion seems to seek something more than its own amusement,—there is little—very little, I fear, to be said for its humanity.—It may be a sport to the miser,—but consider,—it must be death and destruction to others.—The moment this sordid humour begins to govern—farewell all honest and natural affection! farewell all he owes to parents, to children, to friends!—how fast the obligations vanish! see—he is now stripped of all feelings whatever:—the shrill cry of justice—and the low lamentation of humble distress, are notes equally beyond his compass.—Eternal God! see!—he passes by one whom thou hast just bruised, without one pensive reflection:—he enters the cabin of the widow whose husband and child thou hast taken to thyself,—exacts his bond, without a sigh!—Heaven! if I am to be tempted,—let it be by glory,—by ambition,—by some generous and manly vice:—if I must fall, let it be by some passion which thou hast planted in my nature, which shall not harden my heart, but leave me room at last to retreat and come back to thee!

It would be easy here to add the common arguments which reason offers against this vice; but they are so well understood, both in matter and form,—it is needless.

I might cite to you what Seneca says upon it

——but the misfortune is, that at the same time he was writing against riches, he was enjoying a great estate, and using every means to make that estate still greater.

With infinite pleasure might a preacher enrich his discourse in this place, by weaving into it all the smart things which ancient or modern wits have said upon the love of money:—he might inform you,

“——That poverty wants something,——that covetousness wanteth all.”

“That a miser can only be said to have riches, as a sick man has a fever, which holds and tyrannizes over the man——not he over it.”

“That covetousness is the shirt of the soul,——the last vice it parts with.”

“That nature is content with few things,——or that nature is never satisfied at all, &c.”

The reflection of our SAVIOUR, *That the life of man consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth*,——speaks more to the heart,——and the single hint of the *Camel*, and what a very narrow passage he has to go through,——has more coercion in it, than all the see-saws of philosophy.

I shall endeavour therefore to draw such other reflections from this piece of sacred history, as are applicable to human life,——and more likely to be of use.

There is nothing generally in which our happiness and honour are more nearly concerned, than in forming true notions both of men and things; for in proportion as we think rightly of them, we approve ourselves to the world,——and as we govern ourselves by such judgments, so we secure our peace and well-being in passing through it: the false steps and miscarriages in life, issuing from a defect in this capital point, are so many and fatal, that there can be nothing more instructive

than an inquiry into the causes of this perversion, which often appears so very gross in us, that were you to take a view of the world,——see what notions it entertains, and by what considerations it is governed,——you would say of the mistakes of human judgment, what the prophet does of the folly of human actions,——“*That we were wise to do evil, but to judge rightly, had no understanding.*”

That in many dark and abstracted questions of mere speculation, we should err——is not strange: we live among mysteries and riddles, and almost every thing which comes in our way, in one light or other, may be said to baffle our understandings,——yet seldom so as to mistake in extremities, and take one contrary for another;——’tis very rare, for instance, that we take the virtue of a plant to be hot, when it is extremely cold,——or, that we try the experiment of opium, to keep us waking:——yet, this we are continually attempting in the conduct of life, as well as in the great ends and measures of it. That such wrong determinations in us do not arise from any defect of judgment inevitably misleading us——would reflect dishonour upon God; as if he had made and sent men into the world on purpose to play the fool. His all-bountiful hand made his judgment, like his heart, upright; and the instances of his sagacity, in other things, abundantly confirm it: we are led therefore in course to a supposition, that, in all inconsistent instances, there is a secret bias, somehow or other, hung upon the mind, which turns it aside from reason and truth.

What this is, if we do not care to search for it in ourselves, we shall find it registered in this transaction of Felix: and we may depend that in all wrong judgments whatever in such plain cases as this, that the same explanation must be given of it which is given in the text,——namely, that it is some selfish considera-

tion——some secret dirty engagement with some little appetite, which does us so much dishonour.

The judgments of the more disinterested and impartial of us, receive no small tincture from our affections : we generally consult them in all doubtful points, and it happens well if the matter in question is not almost settled before the arbitrator is called into the debate : ——but in the more flagrant instances, where the passions govern the whole man, 'tis melancholy to see the office to which reason, the great prerogative of his nature, is reduced ; serving the lower appetites in the dishonest drudgery of finding out arguments to justify the present pursuit.

To judge rightly of our own worth, we should retire a little from the world, to see all its pleasures——and pains too, in their proper size and dimensions ; ——this, no doubt, was the reason St Paul, when he intended to convert Felix, began his discourse upon the day of judgment, on purpose to take the heart off from this world and its pleasures, which dishonour the understanding so as to turn the wisest of men into fools and children.

If you enlarge your observations upon this plan, you will find where the evil lies which has supported those desperate opinions which have so long divided the Christian world——and are likely to divide it for ever.

Consider popery well ; you will be convinced, that the truest definition which can be given of it, is,——That it is a pecuniary system, well contrived to operate upon men's passions and weakness, whilst their pockets are o'picking : run through all the points of difference between us,——and when you see, that in every one of them, they serve the same end which Felix had in view, either of money or power ; there is little room left to doubt whence the cloud arises which is spread over the understanding.

If this reasoning is conclusive with regard to those who merely differ from us in religion,——let us try if it will not hold good with regard to those who have none at all,——or rather who affect to treat all persuasions of it, with ridicule alike. Thanks to good sense, good manners, and a more enlarged knowledge, this humour is going down, and seems to be settling at present, chiefly amongst the inferior classes of people ——where it is likely to rest: as for the lowest ranks, though they are apt enough to follow the modes of their betters, yet are they not likely to be struck with this one, of making merry with that which is their consolation; they are too serious a set of poor people ever heartily to enter into it.—

There is enough, however, of it in the world to say, that this all-sacred system, which holds the world in harmony and peace, is too often the first object that the giddy and inconsiderate make choice of to try the temper of their wits upon. Now, of the numbers who make this experiment, do you believe that one in a thousand does it from conviction,——or from arguments which a course of study,——much cool reasoning,——and a sober inquiry into antiquity, and the true merits of the question, has furnished him with?——The years and way of life of the most forward of these, lead us to a different explanation.

Religion, which lays so many restraints upon us, is a troublesome companion to those who will lay no restraints upon themselves;——and for this reason there is nothing more common to be observed, than that the little arguments and cavils, which such men have gathered up against it in the early part of their lives,——how considerable soever they may have appeared, when viewed through their passions and prejudices, which give an unnatural turn to all objects,——yet, when the edge of appetite has been worn down, and

the heat of the pursuit pretty well over,——and reason and judgment have got possession of their empire——
——They seldom fail of bringing the lost sheep back to his fold.

May God bring us all there. Amen.





Sermon vii. [xx.]

THE PRODIGAL SON.

“And not many days after, the younger son gathered all he had together, and took his journey into a far country.”—LUKE xv. 13.

I KNOW not whether the remark is to our honour or otherwise, that lessons of wisdom have never such power over us, as when they are wrought into the heart, through the ground-work of a story which engages the passions: Is it that we are like iron, and must first be heated before we can be wrought upon? or, Is the heart so in love with deceit, that where a true report will not reach it, we must cheat it with a fable, in order to come at truth?

Whether this parable of the prodigal (for so it is usually called)—is really such, or built upon some story known at that time in Jerusalem, is not much to the purpose; it is given us to enlarge upon, and turn to the best moral account we can.

“A certain man,” says our SAVIOUR, “had two sons, and the younger of them said to his father, Give me the portion of goods which falls to me: and he divided unto them his substance. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.”

The account is short: the interesting and pathetic passages with which such a transaction would be necessarily connected, are left to be supplied by the heart:—the story is silent—but nature is not:—much kind advice, and many a tender expostulation, would fall from the father's lips, no doubt, upon this occasion.

He would dissuade his son from the folly of so rash an enterprise, by shewing him the dangers of the journey,——the inexperience of his age,——the hazards his life, his fortune, his virtue would run, without a guide, without a friend: he would tell him of the many snares and temptations which he had to avoid, or encounter at every step,——the pleasures which would solicit him in every luxurious court,——the little knowledge he could gain—except that of evil: he would speak of the seductions of women,——their charms——their poisons:——what hapless indulgences he might give way to, when far from restraint, and the check of giving his father pain.

The dissuasive would but inflame his desire.——

He gathers all together.——

——I see the picture of his departure—the camels and asses loaden with his substance, detached on one side of the piece, and already on their way:——the prodigal son standing on the foreground, with a forced sedateness, struggling against the fluttering movement of joy, upon his deliverance from restraint:——the elder brother holding his hand, as if unwilling to let it go:——the father,——sad moment! with a firm look, covering a prophetic sentiment, “that all would not go well with his child,”——approaching to embrace him and bid him adieu.——Poor inconsiderate youth! From whose arms art thou flying? From what a shelter art thou going forth into the storm? Art thou weary of a father's affection, of a father's care? or, Hopedst thou to find a warmer interest, a truer counsellor, or a kinder

friend in a land of strangers, where youth is made a prey, and so many thousands are confederated to deceive them, and live by their spoils?

We will seek no farther than this idea for the extravagancies by which the prodigal son added one unhappy example to the number: his fortune wasted——the followers of it fled in course,——the wants of nature remain,——the hand of God gone forth against him,——“*for when he had spent all, a mighty famine arose in that country.*”——Heaven! have pity upon the youth, for he is in hunger and distress——stray’d out of the reach of a parent, who counts every hour of his absence with anguish,——cut off from all his tender offices, by his folly——and from relief and charity from others, by the calamity of the times.——

Nothing so powerfully calls home the mind as distress: the tense fibre then relaxes,——the soul retires to itself,——sits pensive and susceptible of right impressions: if we have a friend, ’tis then we think of him; if a benefactor, at that moment all his kindnesses press upon our mind.—Gracious and bountiful God! Is it not for this that they who in their prosperity forget thee, do yet remember and return to thee in the hour of their sorrow? When our heart is in heaviness, upon whom can we think but thee, who knowest our necessities afar off,—puttest all our tears in thy bottle,—seest every careful thought,—hearest every sigh and melancholy groan we utter.——

Strange!—that we should only begin to think of God with comfort, when with joy and comfort we can think of nothing else.

Man surely is a compound of riddles and contradictions: by the law of his nature he avoids pain, and yet *unless he suffers in the flesh, he will not cease from sin*, though it is sure to bring pain and misery upon his head for ever.

Whilst all went pleasurable on with the prodigal, we hear not one word concerning his father——no pang of remorse for the sufferings in which he had left him, or resolution of returning, to make up the account of his folly: his first hour of distress seem'd to be his first hour of wisdom:——*When he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, whilst I perish!*

Of all the terrors of nature, that of one day or other dying by hunger, is the greatest, and it is wisely wove into our frame to awaken man to industry, and call forth his talents; and though we seem to go on carelessly, sporting with it as we do with other terrors,——yet, he that sees this enemy fairly, and in his most frightly shape, will need no long remonstrance to make him turn out of the way to avoid him.

It was the case of the prodigal——he arose to go to his father.——

——Alas! How shall he tell his story? Ye who have trod this round, tell me in what words he shall give in to his father, the sad *Items* of his extravagance and folly?

——The feasts and banquets which he gave to whole cities in the east,——the costs of Asiatic rarities,——and of Asiatic cooks to dress them,——the expences of singing men and singing women,——the flute, the harp, the sackbut, and of all kinds of music——the dress of the Persian courts, how magnificent! their slaves how numerous!——their chariots, their horses, their palaces, their furniture, what immense sums they had devoured!——what expectations from strangers of condition! what exactions!

How shall the youth make his father comprehend, that he was cheated at Damascus by one of the best men in the world;——that he had lent a part of his substance to a friend at Nineveh, who had fled off with

it to the Ganges;—that a whore of Babylon had swallowed his best pearl, and anointed the whole city with his balm of Gilead;—that he had been sold by a man of honour for twenty shekels of silver, to a worker in graven images;—that the images he had purchased had profited him nothing;—that they could not be transported across the wilderness, and had been burnt with fire at Shusan;—that the apes and peacocks,* which he had sent for from Tharsis, lay dead upon his hands; and that the mummies had not been dead long enough, which had been brought him out of Egypt:—that all had gone wrong since the day he forsook his father's house.

—Leave the story,—it will be told more concisely.—*When he was yet afar off, his father saw him,*—Compassion told it in three words—*he fell upon his neck and kissed him.*

Great is the power of eloquence; but never is it so great as when it pleads along with nature, and the culprit is a child strayed from his duty, and returned to it again with tears: Casuists may settle the point as they will: But what could a parent see more in the account, than the natural one, of an ingenuous heart too open for the world,—smitten with strong sensations of pleasures, and suffered to sally forth unarm'd into the midst of enemies stronger than himself?

Generosity sorrows as much for the overmatched, as Pity herself does.

The idea of a son so ruin'd, would double the father's caresses: every effusion of his tenderness would add bitterness to his son's remorse.—
“Gracious Heaven! what a father have I rendered miserable!”

And he said, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

* Vide 2 Chronicles ix. 21.

But the father said, Bring forth the best robe.——

O ye affections! how fondly do you play at cross purposes with each other!——'Tis the natural dialogue of true transport: joy is not methodical; and where an offender, beloved, overcharges itself in the offence,——words are too cold; and a conciliated heart replies by tokens of esteem.

And he said unto his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him: and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and bring hither the fatted calf, and let us eat and drink and be merry.

When the affections so kindly break loose, Joy is another name for Religion.

We look up as we taste it: the cold stoic without, when he hears the dancing and the music, may ask sullenly (with the elder brother) What it means? and refuse to enter: but the humane and compassionate all fly impetuously to the banquet, given *for a son who was dead and is alive again—who was lost and is found*. Gentle spirits light up the pavilion with a sacred fire; and parental love and filial piety lead in the mask with riot and festivity!——Was it not for this that God gave man music to strike upon the kindly passions; that Nature taught the feet to dance to its movements, and as chief governess of the feast, poured forth wine into the goblet, to crown it with gladness?

The intention of this parable is so clear from the occasion of it, that it will not be necessary to perplex it with any tedious explanation: it was designed by way of indirect remonstrance to the Scribes and Pharisees, who animadverted upon our SAVIOUR's conduct, for entering so freely into conferences with sinners, in order to reclaim them. To that end he proposes the parable of the shepherd, who left his ninety and nine sheep that were safe in the fold, to go and seek for one sheep that was gone astray,—telling

them in other places, that they who were whole wanted not a physician,—but they that were sick: and here, to carry on the same lesson, and to prove how acceptable such a recovery was to God, he relates this account of the prodigal son and his welcome reception.

I know not whether it would be a subject of much edification to convince you here, that our SAVIOUR, by the prodigal son, particularly pointed at those who were *sinner of the Gentiles*, and were recovered by divine Grace to repentance;—and that by the elder brother, he intended as manifestly the more froward of the Jews, who envied their conversion, and thought it a kind of wrong to their primogeniture, in being made fellow-heirs with them of the promises of God.

These uses have been so ably set forth, in so many good sermons upon the prodigal son, that I shall turn aside from them at present, and content myself with some reflections upon that fatal passion which led him,——and so many thousands after the example, *to gather all he had together, and take his journey into a far country.*

The love of variety, or curiosity of seeing new things, which is the same, or at least a sister passion to it,——seems wove into the frame of every son and daughter of Adam; we usually speak of it as one of nature's levities, though planted within us for the solid purposes of carrying forwards the mind to fresh inquiry and knowledge: strip us of it, the mind (I fear) would doze for ever over the present page; and we should all of us rest at ease with such objects as presented themselves in the parish or province where we first drew breath.

It is to this spur which is ever in our sides, that we owe the impatience of this desire for travelling: the passion is no way bad,——but as others are,——in

its mismanagement or excess ;——order it rightly, the advantages are worth the pursuit ; the chief of which are——to learn the languages, the laws and customs, and understand the government and interest of other nations,——to acquire an urbanity and confidence of behaviour, and fit the mind more easily for conversation and discourse——to take us out of the company of our aunts and grandmothers, and from the track of nursery mistakes ; and by showing us new objects, or old ones in new lights, to reform our judgments——by tasting perpetually the varieties of nature, to know what *is good*——by observing the address and arts of men, to conceive what *is sincere*——and by seeing the difference of so many various humours and manners——to look into ourselves and form our own.

This is some part of the cargo we might return with ; but the impulse of seeing new sights, augmented with that of getting clear from all lessons both of wisdom and reproof at home——carries our youth too early out, to turn this venture to much account ; on the contrary, if the scene painted of the prodigal in his travels, looks more like a copy than an original,——will it not be well if such an adventurer, with so unpromising a setting out,——without *carte*,——without compass,——be not cast away for ever,——and may he not be said to escape well——if he returns to his country, only as naked as he first left it ?

But you will send an able pilot with your son——a scholar.——

If wisdom can speak in no other language but Greek or Latin——you do well——or if mathematics will make a man a gentleman——or natural philosophy but teach him to make a bow,——he may be of some service in introducing your son into good societies, and supporting him in them when he has done——but the upshot will be generally this, that in the most pressing

occasions of address——if he is a mere man of reading, the unhappy youth will have the tutor to carry,—and not the tutor to carry him.

But you will avoid this extreme ; he shall be escorted by one who knows the world, not merely from books—but from his own experience :——a man who has been employed on such services, and thrice made *the tour of Europe, with success.*

——That is, without breaking his own, or his pupil's neck ;——for if he is such as my eyes have seen ! some broken *Swiss valet de chambre*,—some general undertaker, who will perform the journey in so many months, “IF GOD PERMIT,”—much knowledge will not accrue ;——some profit at least,—he will learn the amount to a halfpenny, of every stage from Calais to Rome ;——he will be carried to the best inns,—instructed where there is the best wine, and sup a livre cheaper, than if the youth had been left to make the tour and the bargain himself.—Look at our governor ! I beseech you :——see, he is an inch taller, as he relates the advantages.——

——And here endeth his pride—his knowledge, and his use.

But when your son gets abroad, he will be taken out of his hand, by his society with men of rank and letters, with whom he will pass the greatest part of his time.

Let me observe, in the first place,—that company which is really good, is very rare,—and very shy : but you have surmounted this difficulty ; and procured him the best letters of recommendation to the most eminent and respectable in every capital.

And I answer, that he will obtain all by them, which courtesy strictly stands obliged to pay on such occasions, but no more.

There is nothing in which we are so much deceived,

as in the advantages proposed from our connexions and discourse with the literati, &c., in foreign parts; especially if the experiment is made before we are matured by years or study.

Conversation is a traffick; and if you enter into it, without some stock of knowledge, to balance the account perpetually betwixt you,—the trade drops at once: and this is the reason,——however it may be boasted to the contrary, why travellers have so little (especially good) conversation with natives,——owing to their suspicion,—or perhaps conviction, that there is nothing to be extracted from the conversation of young itinerants, worth the trouble of their bad language,—or the interruption of their visits.

The pain on these occasions is usually reciprocal; the consequence of which is, that the disappointed youth seeks an easier society; and as bad company is always ready, and ever lying in wait,—the career is soon finished; and the poor prodigal returns the same object of pity, with the prodigal in the Gospel.





Sermon viij. [xxvij.]

THE ABUSES OF CONSCIENCE CONSIDERED.

“ —For we trust we have a good Conscience.” —
HEBREWS xiii. 18.

TRUST! — Trust we have a good Conscience!
— Surely you will say, if there is any thing
in this life which a man may depend upon,
and to the knowledge of which he is capable of
arriving upon the most indisputable evidence, it must
be this very thing, — Whether he has a good Con-
science, or no.

If a man thinks at all, he cannot well be a stranger
to the true state of this account: — He must be
privy to his own thoughts and desires — He must
remember his past pursuits, and know certainly the
true springs and motives, which, in general, have
governed the actions of his life.

In other matters we may be deceived by false
appearances; and as the wise man complains, *Hardly
do we guess aright at the things that are upon the
earth, and with labour do we find the things that are
before us*: — but here the mind has all the evidence
and facts within herself: — is conscious of the web
she has wove: — knows its texture and fineness;
and the exact share which every passion has had in
working upon the several designs, which virtue or
vice has plann'd before her.

Now,—as Conscience is nothing else but the knowledge which the mind has within itself of this ; and the judgment, either of approbation or censure, which it unavoidably makes upon the successive actions of our lives,—’tis plain, you will say, from the very terms of the proposition, whenever this inward testimony goes against a man, and he stands self-accused,—that he must necessarily be a *guilty man*. And, on the contrary, when the report is favourable on his side, and his heart condemns him not,—that it is not a matter of *trust*, as the Apostle intimates, but a matter of certainty and fact, that the *Conscience is good*, and that the *man* must be *good* also.

At first sight, this may seem to be a true state of the case ; and I make no doubt but the knowledge of right and wrong is so truly impress’d upon the mind of man ; that, did no such thing ever happen, as that the Conscience of a man, by long habits of sin, might (as the Scripture assures us it may) insensibly become hard ; and, like some tender parts of his body, by much stress, and continual hard usage, lose, by degrees, that nice sense and perception with which God and nature endowed it : —Did this never happen :—or was it certain that self-love could never hang the least bias upon the judgment :—or that the little interests below could rise up and perplex the faculties of our upper regions, and encompass them about with clouds and thick darkness : —could no such thing as favour and affection enter this sacred court :—did WIT disdain to take a bribe in it, or was ashamed to shew its face as an advocate for an unwarrantable enjoyment :—or, lastly, were we assured that INTEREST stood always unconcern’d whilst the cause was hearing,—and that PASSION never got into the judgment-seat, and pronounced sentence in the stead of Reason, which is supposed always to preside and determine upon the case :—was this truly so, as the

objection must suppose, no doubt, then, the religious and moral state of a man would be exactly what he himself esteemed it ; and the guilt or innocence of every man's life could be known, in general, by no better measure, than the degrees of his own approbation or censure.

I own, in one case, whenever a man's Conscience does accuse him (as it seldom errs on that side) that he is guilty ; and, unless in melancholy and hypochondriac cases, we may safely pronounce that there is always sufficient grounds for the accusation.

But, the converse of the proposition will not hold true,—namely, That wherever there is guilt, the Conscience must accuse ; and, if it does not, that a man is therefore innocent.—This is not fact :—so that the common consolation which some good Christian or other is hourly administering to himself, —That he thanks God his mind does not misgive him ; and that consequently, he has a good Conscience, because he has a quiet one—As current as the inference is, and as infallible as the rule appears at first sight, yet, when you look nearer to it, and try the truth of this rule upon plain facts, you find it liable to so much error, from a false application of it :—the principle on which it goes so often perverted :—the whole force of it lost, and sometimes so vilely cast away, that it is painful to produce the common examples from human life, which confirm this account.

A man shall be vicious and utterly debauched in his principles ; exceptionable in his conduct to the world : shall live shameless,—in the open commission of a sin which no reason or pretence can justify ;—a sin, by which, contrary to all the workings of humanity within, he shall ruin for ever the deluded partner of his guilt ; —rob her of her best dowry ;—and not only cover her own head with dishonour, but involve a whole

virtuous family in shame and sorrow for her sake.—Surely,—you'll think, Conscience must lead such a man a troublesome life:—he can have no rest night or day from its reproaches.

Alas! Conscience had something else to do all this time than break in upon him: as *Elijah* reproached the god *Baal*, this *domestic god* was either *talking, or pursuing, or was in a journey, or, peradventure, he slept, and could not be awoke.* Perhaps he was gone out in company with *HONOUR*, to fight a duel;—to pay off some debt at play;—or dirty annuity, the bargain of his lust.—Perhaps, Conscience all this time was engaged at home, talking aloud against petty larceny, and executing vengeance upon some such puny crimes as his fortune and rank in life secured him against all temptation of committing:—so that he lives as merrily, —sleeps as soundly in his bed;—and, at the last, meets death with as much unconcern,—perhaps, much more so, than a much better man.

Another is sordid, unmerciful;—a strait-hearted, selfish wretch, incapable either of private friendships, or public spirit.—Take notice how he passes by the widow and orphan in their distress; and sees all the miseries incident to human life without a sigh or a prayer.—Shall not Conscience rise up and sting him on such occasions? No.—Thank God, there is no occasion. “I pay every man his own,—I have no fornication to answer to my Conscience, no faithless vows or promises to make up, I have debauch'd no man's wife or child.—Thank God, I am not as other men, adulterers, unjust, or even as this libertine who stands before me.”

A third is crafty and designing in his nature.—View his whole life,—'tis nothing else but a cunning contexture of dark arts and unequitable subterfuges, basely to defeat the true intent of all laws, plain-dealing,

and the safe enjoyment of our several properties.— You will see such a one working out a frame of little designs upon the ignorance and perplexities of the poor and needy man :—shall raise a fortune upon the inexperience of a youth,—or the unsuspecting temper of his friend, who would have trusted him with his life. When old age comes on, and repentance calls him to look back upon this black account, and state it over again with his Conscience—Conscience looks into the *Statutes at Large*,—finds perhaps no *express law* broken by what he has done ;—perceives no penalty or forfeiture incurr'd ;—sees no scourge waving over his head,—or prison opening its gate upon him —What is there to affright his Conscience?—Conscience has got safely entrench'd behind the letter of the law, sits there invulnerable, fortified with *cases* and *reports* so strongly on all sides,—that 'tis not preaching can dispossess it of its hold.

Another shall want even this refuge,—shall break through all this ceremony of slow chicane ; scorns the doubtful workings of secret plots and cautious trains to bring about his purpose.—See the bare-faced villain how he cheats, lies, perjures, robs, murders,—horrid ! But indeed much better was not to be expected in this case,—the poor man was in the dark !—His priest had got the keeping of his Conscience, and all he had let him know of it was, That he must believe in the *Pope* ;—go to mass ;—cross himself ;—tell his beads ;—be a good Catholic ; and that this in all conscience was enough to carry him to heaven. What?—if he perjures?—Why,—he had a mental reservation in it. But if he is so wicked and abandoned a wretch as you represent him,—if he robs or murders, will not Conscience, on every such act, receive a wound itself?—Ay—But the man has carried it to confession, the wound digests there,

and will do well enough,——and in a short time be quite healed up by absolution.

O *Pocrisy* ! what hast thou to answer for ?——when not content with the too many natural and fatal ways through which the heart is every day thus treacherous to itself above all things,——thou hast wilfully set open this wide gate of deceit before the face of this unwary *Traveller*,——too apt, God knows, to go astray of himself,——and confidently speak peace to his soul, when there is no peace.

Of this the common instances, which I have drawn out of life, are too notorious to require much evidence. If any man doubts the reality of them, or thinks it impossible for man to be such a bubble to himself,—I must refer him a moment to his reflections, and shall then venture to trust the appeal with his own heart. Let him consider in how different a degree of detestation numbers of wicked actions stand *there*, though equally bad and vicious in their own natures—he will soon find that such of them as strong inclination or custom have prompted him to commit, are generally dress'd out and painted with all the false beauties which a soft and flattering hand can give them ; and that the others to which he feels no propensity, appear, at once, naked and deformed, surrounded with all the true circumstances of folly and dishonour.

When David surprised Saul sleeping in the cave, and cut off the skirt of his robe,——we read, his heart smote him for what he had done.——But, in the matter of Uriah, where a faithful and gallant servant, whom he ought to have loved and honour'd, fell to make way for his lust ; where *Conscience* had so much greater reason to take the alarm,——his heart smote him not.——A whole year had almost passed from the first commission of that crime——to the time Nathan was sent to reprove him ; and we read not once of the least

sorrow or compunction of heart, which he testified during all that time, for what he had done.

Thus Conscience, this once able monitor,—placed on high as a judge within us,—and intended, by our Maker, as a just and equitable one too,—by an unhappy train of causes and impediments,—takes often such imperfect cognizance of what passes,—does its office so negligently,—sometimes so corruptly, that it is not to be trusted alone: and therefore, we find, there is a necessity, an absolute necessity, of joining another principle with it, to aid, if not govern, its determinations.

So that if you would form a just judgment of what is of infinite importance to you not to be misled in, namely, in what degree of real merit you stand, either as an honest man,—an useful citizen,—a faithful subject to your king,—or a good servant to your GOD—call in RELIGION and MORALITY.—Look—What is written in the law of GOD?—How readest thou?—Consult calm reason, and the unchangeable obligations of justice and truth,—What say they?

Let Conscience determine the matter upon these reports,—and then, if *thy heart condemn thee not*,—which is the case the Apostle supposes,—the rule will be infallible—*Thou wilt have confidence towards God*;—that is, have just grounds to believe the judgment thou hast past upon thyself, is the judgment of GOD; and nothing else but an anticipation of that righteous sentence, which will be pronounced, hereafter, upon thee by that BEING, before whom thou art finally to give an account of thy actions.

Blessed is the man, indeed then, as the Author of the book of *Ecclesiasticus* expresses it, *who is not pricked with the multitude of his sins.—Blessed is the man whose heart hath not condemned him, and who is not fallen from*

his hope in the Lord. Whether he be rich, continues he, or whether he be poor,—if he have a good heart (a heart thus guided and inform'd)—He shall at all times rejoice in a cheerful countenance—His mind shall tell him more than seven watchmen that sit above upon a tower on high. In the darkest doubts it shall conduct him safer than a thousand Casuists, and give the state he lives in, a better security for his behaviour, than all the clauses and restrictions put together, which the wisdom of the legislature is forced to multiply,—forced, I say, as things stand; human laws being not a matter of original choice, but of pure necessity, brought in to fence against the mischievous effects of those Consciences which are no law unto themselves: wisely intending by the many provisions made, That in all such corrupt or misguided cases, where principle and the checks of Conscience will not make us upright, —to supply their force, and by the terrors of jails and halters oblige us to it.

To have the fear of God before our eyes; and, in our mutual dealings with each other, to govern our actions by the eternal measures of right and wrong: —the first of these will comprehend the duties of religion: the second those of morality: which are so inseparably connected together, that you cannot divide these two *Tables*, even in imagination (though the attempt is often made in practice), without breaking and mutually destroying them both.

I said the attempt is often made; —and so it is; —there being nothing more common than to see a man, who has no sense at all of religion, —and indeed has *so much* of honesty, as to pretend to none; who would yet take it as the bitterest affront, should you but hint at a suspicion of his moral character, —or imagine he was not conscientiously just, and scrupulous to the uttermost mite.

When there is some appearance that it is so,—though one is not willing even to suspect the appearance of so great a virtue, as moral honesty ;—yet were we to look into the grounds of it in the present case, I am persuaded we should find little reason to envy such a man the honour of his motive.

Let him declaim as pompously as he can on the subject, it will be found at last to rest upon no better foundation than either his interest, his pride, his ease ; or some such little and changeable passion, as will give us but small dependence upon his actions in matters of great stress.

Give me leave to illustrate this by an example.

I know the banker I deal with, or the physician I usually call in, to be neither of them men of much religion : I hear them make a jest of it every day, and treat all its sanctions with so much scorn and contempt, as to put the matter past doubt. Well,—notwithstanding this I put my fortune into the hands of the one, —and, what is dearer still to me, I trust my life to the honest skill of the other.—Now, let me examine what is my reason for this great confidence.—Why, —in the first place, I believe that there is no probability that either of them will employ the power, I put into their hands, to my disadvantage. I consider that honesty serves the purposes of this life,—I know their success in the world depends upon the fairness of their character ;—that they cannot hurt me without hurting themselves more.

But put it otherwise, namely, that interest lay for once on the other side.—That a case should happen wherein the one, without stain to his reputation, could secrete my fortune, and leave me naked in the world : —or that the other could send me out of it, and enjoy an estate by my death, without dishonour to himself or his art—In this case what hold have I of

either of them?—Religion, the strongest of all motives, is out of the question.—Interest, the next most powerful motive in this world, is strongly against me.—I have nothing left to cast into the scale to balance this temptation.—I must lie at the mercy of honour,—or some such capricious principle.—Strait security! for two of my best and most valuable blessings,—my property and my life!

As therefore we can have no dependence upon morality without religion;—so, on the other hand, there is nothing better to be expected from religion without morality; nor can any man be supposed to discharge his duties to God, (whatever fair appearances he may hang out, that he does so) if he does not pay as conscientious a regard to the duties which he owes his fellow-creature.

This is a point capable in itself of strict demonstration.—Nevertheless, 'tis no rarity to see a man whose real moral merit stands very low, who yet entertains the highest notion of himself, in the light of a devout and religious man. He shall not only be covetous, revengeful, implacable,—but even wanting in points of common honesty.—Yet because he talks loud against the infidelity of the age,—is zealous for some points of religion,—goes twice a day to church, attends the sacraments, and amuses himself with a few instrumental duties of religion,—shall cheat his conscience into a judgment that for this he is a religious man, and has discharged faithfully his duty to God: and you will find, that such a man, through force of this delusion, generally looks down with spiritual pride upon every other man who has less affectation of piety, though, perhaps, ten times more moral honesty than himself.

This is likewise a sore evil under the sun; and I believe there is no one mistaken principle which, for

its time, has wrought more serious mischiefs. For a general proof of this, examine the history of the *Romish* church.—See what scenes of cruelty, murders, rapines, bloodshed, have all been sanctified by a religion not strictly governed by morality.

In how many kingdoms of the world, has the crusading sword of this misguided Saint-Errant spared neither age, or merit, or sex, or condition!——And, as he fought under the banners of a religion, which set him loose from justice and humanity,——he shewed none,——mercilessly trampled upon both, heard neither the cries of the unfortunate, nor pitied their distresses.

If the testimony of past centuries in this matter is not sufficient,——consider at this instant, how the votaries of that religion are every day thinking to do service and honour to God, by actions which are a dishonour and scandal to themselves.

To be convinced of this, go with me for a moment into the prisons of the inquisition,——Behold *religion* with mercy and justice chain'd down under her feet,——there sitting ghastly upon a black tribunal, propp'd up with racks and instruments of torment.——Hark!——What a piteous groan!——See the melancholy wretch who utter'd it, just brought forth to undergo the anguish of a mock trial, and endure the utmost pains that a studied system of *religious cruelty* has been able to invent. Behold this helpless victim delivered up to his tormentors. His body so wasted with sorrow and long confinement, you'll see every nerve and muscle as it suffers.——Observe the last movement of that horrid engine.——What convulsions it has thrown him into. Consider the nature of the posture in which he now lies stretch'd.——What exquisite torture he endures by it.—'Tis all nature can bear.——Good God! see how it keeps his

weary soul hanging upon his trembling lips, willing to take its leave,——but not suffered to depart. Behold the unhappy wretch led back to his cell,——dragg'd out of it again to meet the flames,——and the insults in his last agonies, which this principle——this principle that there can be religion without morality, has prepared for him.

The surest way to try the merit of any disputed notion,——is to trace down the consequences such a notion has produced, and compare them with the *spirit* of Christianity.——'Tis the short and decisive rule, which our SAVIOUR has left for these and such like cases,——and is worth a thousand arguments.—*By their fruits*, says he, *ye shall know them*.

Thus religion and morality, like fast friends and natural allies, can never be set at variance, without the mutual ruin and dishonour of them both;——and whoever goes about this unfriendly office, is no well-wisher to either,——and whatever he pretends, he deceives his own heart, and, I fear, his morality, as well as his religion, will be vain.

I will add no farther to the length of this discourse, than by two or three short and independent rules, deducible from what has been said.

1st, Whenever a man talks loudly against religion, always suspect that it is not his reason, but his passions which have got the better of his creed.—A *bad life* and a *good belief* are disagreeable and troublesome neighbours, and where they separate, depend upon it, 'tis for no other cause but quietness sake.

2dly, When a man thus represented, tells you in any particular instance, that such a thing goes *against* his conscience,——always believe he means exactly the same thing as when he tells you such a thing goes against his stomach,——a present want of appetite being generally the true cause of both.

In a word,——trust that man in nothing,——who has not a conscience in every thing.

And in your own case remember this plain distinction, a mistake which has ruin'd thousands——That your conscience is not a law;—no,—God and reason made the law, and has placed Conscience within you to determine,—not like an *Asiatic Cadi*, according to the ebbs and flows of his own passions; but like a *British judge* in this land of liberty, who makes no new law,——but faithfully declares that glorious law which he finds already written.



THE
HISTORY
OF A
GOOD WARM WATCH-COAT;

With which the present Possessor is
not content to cover his own Shoul-
ders, unless he can cut out of
it a Petticoat for his Wife,
and a Pair of Breeches
for his Son.



THE
HISTORY
OF A
GOOD WARM WATCH-COAT,* &c.
A POLITICAL ROMANCE.

SIR,

I N my last, for want of something better to write about, I told you what a world of fending and proving we have had of late in this little village¹ of ours, about an old cast pair of black plush breeches,² which *John*³ our parish clerk, about ten years ago, it seems, had made a promise of to one *Trim*,⁴ who is our

* As the following piece was suppressed during the lifetime of Mr Sterne, and as there are some grounds to believe that it was not intended by him for publication, an apology may be deemed necessary for inserting it in the present edition of his Works. It must be acknowledged, that a mere *jeu d'esprit* relating to a private dispute which could interest only a few, and which was intended to divert a small circle of friends, was with great propriety concealed while it might tend to revive

¹ York.

² The Commissaryship of Pickering and Pocklington.

³ Dr John Fountayne, Dean of York.

⁴ Dr Topham.

sexton and dog-whipper.—To this you write me word, that you have had more than either one or two occasions to know a great deal of the shifty behaviour of the said master *Trim*—and that you are astonished, nor can you for your soul conceive, how so worthless a fellow, and so worthless a thing into the bargain, could become the occasion of so much racket as I have represented.——

Now, though you do not say expressly you could wish to hear any more about it, yet I see plainly enough I have raised your curiosity; and therefore, from the same motive that I slightly mentioned it at all in my last letter, I will in this give you a full and very circumstantial account of the whole affair.

But, before I begin, I must first set you right in one very material point, in which I have misled you, as to the true cause of all this uproar amongst us—which does not take its rise, as I then told you, from the affair of the breeches, but, on the contrary, the whole affair of the breeches has taken its rise from it.

departed animosities, or give pain to any of the persons who were concerned in so trifling a contest. And these considerations seem to have had weight with those to whom the MS. was intrusted; it not having been made public until many years after it was written, nor until most of the gentlemen mentioned in it were dead. After the lapse of more than twenty years, it may be presumed that there can be no impropriety in giving one of the earliest of Mr Sterne's *bagatelles* a place among his more important performances. The slightest sketches of a genius are too valuable to be neglected; and the present edition would be incomplete, if this composition, written immediately before *Tristram Shandy*, and which may be considered as the precursor of it, was omitted. As the whole of it alludes to facts and circumstances confined to the city of York, it will be necessary to observe, that it was occasioned by a controversy between Dr Fountayne and Dr Topham, in the year 1758, on a charge made by the latter, against the former, of a breach of promise, in withholding from him some preferment, which he had reason to expect. For the better illustration of this little Satire, a few notes are added, from the pamphlets which appeared while this insignificant difference was agitating.

—To understand which, you must know, that the first beginning of the squabble was not betwixt *John* the parish-clerk, and *Trim* the sexton, but betwixt the parson* of the parish and the said master *Trim*, about an old *watch-coat*,† that had hung up many years in the church, which *Trim* had set his heart upon; and nothing would serve *Trim*, but he must take it home, in order to have it converted into a *warm under-petticoat* for his wife, and a *jerkin* for himself against winter; which, in a plaintive tone, he most humbly begged his reverence would consent to.

I need not tell you, Sir, who have so often felt it, that a principle of strong compassion transports a generous mind sometimes beyond what is strictly right; —the parson was within an ace of being an honourable example of this very crime—for no sooner did the distinct words—*petticoat—poor wife—warm—winter*, strike upon his ear—but his heart warmed—and before *Trim* had well got to the end of his petition (being a gentleman of a frank open temper) he told him he was welcome to it with all his heart and soul.—But, *Trim*, says he, as you see I am but just got down to my living, and am an utter stranger to all parish matters, knowing nothing about this old watch-coat you beg of me, having never seen it in my life, and therefore cannot be a judge whether 'tis fit for such a purpose, or, if it is, in truth know not whether 'tis mine to bestow upon you or not—you must have a week or ten days patience, till I can make some enquiries about it—and, if I find it is in my power, I tell you again, man, your wife is heartily welcome to an under-petticoat out of it, and you to a jerkin, was the thing as good again as you represent it.

* Dr Hutton, Archbishop of York.

† A patent place, in the gift of the Archbishop, which had been given to Dr Topham for his life, and which, in 1758, he solicited to have granted to one of his family after his death.

It is necessary to inform you, Sir, in this place, that the parson was earnestly bent to serve *Trim* in this affair, not only from the motive of generosity, which I have justly ascribed to him, but likewise from another motive, and that was by making some sort of recompence for a multitude of small services which *Trim* had occasionally done, and indeed was continually doing (as he was much about the house) when his own man was out of the way.—For all these reasons together, I say, the parson of the parish intended to serve *Trim* in this matter to the utmost of his power. All that was wanting, was, previously to enquire if any one had a *claim* to it, or whether, as it had time immemorial hung up in the church, the taking it down might not raise a clamour in the parish. These enquiries were the things that *Trim* dreaded in his heart—he knew very well, that, if the parson should but say one word to the churchwardens about it, there would be an end of the whole affair. For this, and some other reasons not necessary to be told you at present, *Trim* was for allowing no time in this matter—but on the contrary doubled his diligence and importunity at the vicarage-house—plagued the whole family to death—prest his suit morning, noon, and night; and, to shorten my story, teased the poor gentleman, who was but in an ill state of health, almost out of his life about it.

You will not wonder when I tell you, that all this hurry and precipitation, on the side of master *Trim*, produced its natural effect on the side of the parson, and that was, a suspicion that all was not right at the bottom.

He was one evening sitting alone in his study, weighing and turning this doubt every way in his mind, and after an hour and a half's serious deliberation upon the affair, and running over *Trim's* behaviour throughout—he was just saying to himself—*it must be*

so—when a sudden rap at the door put an end to his soliloquy, and in a few minutes to his doubts too; for a labourer in the town, who deemed himself past his fifty-second year, had been returned by the constables in the militia list—and he had come with a groat in his hand to search the parish-register for his age. The parson bid the poor fellow put the groat into his pocket, and go into the kitchen—then shutting the study-door, and taking down the parish-register—*who knows*, says he, *but I may find something here about this self-same watch-coat?* He had scarce unclasped the book, in saying this, when he popped on the very thing he wanted, fairly wrote in the first page, pasted to the inside of one of the covers, whereon was a memorandum about the very thing in question, in these express words—*Memorandum.* “The great watch-coat was purchased and given, above two hundred years ago, by the lord of the manor to this parish-church, to the sole use and behoof of the poor sextons thereof, and their successors for ever, to be worn by them respectively in winterly cold nights in ringing *complines, passing-bells, &c.*, which the said lord of the manor had done in piety to keep the poor wretches warm, and for the good of his own soul, for which they were directed to pray, &c.” *Just Heaven!* said the parson to himself, looking upwards, *what an escape have I had! give this for an under-petticoat to Trim’s wife? I would not have consented to such a desecration to be Primate of all England—nay, I would not have disturbed a single button of it for all my tythes.*

Scarce were the words out of his mouth, when in pops *Trim* with the whole subject of the exclamation under both his arms—I say under both his arms—for he had actually got it ript and cut out ready, his own jerkin under one arm, and the petticoat under the other, in order to carry to the taylor to be made up, and had

just stepped in, in high spirits, to shew the parson how cleverly it had held out.

There are now many good similies subsisting in the world, but which I have time neither to recollect or look for, which would give you a strong conception of the astonishment and honest indignation which this unexpected stroke of *Trim's* impudence impressed upon the parson's looks—let it suffice to say, that it exceeded all fair description—as well as all power of proper resentment——except this, that *Trim* was ordered, in a stern voice, to lay the bundles down upon the table—to go about his business, and wait upon him, at his peril, the next morning at eleven precisely.—Against this hour, like a wise man, the parson had sent to desire *John* the parish-clerk, who bore an exceeding good character, as a man of truth, and who, having moreover a pretty freehold of about eighteen pounds a year in the township, was a leading man in it; and, upon the whole, was such a one, of whom it might be said, that he rather did honour to his office, than that his office did honour to him—him he sends for, with the churchwardens, and one of the sidesmen, a grave knowing old man, to be present—for, as *Trim* had withheld the whole truth from the parson touching the watch-coat, he thought it probable he would as certainly do the same thing to others. Though this, I said, was wise, the trouble of the precaution might have been spared—because the parson's character was unblemished—and he had ever been held by the world in the estimation of a man of honour and integrity.—*Trim's* character, on the contrary, was as well known, if not in the world, at least in all the parish, to be that of a little, dirty, pimping, pettifogging, ambidextrous fellow—who neither cared what he did or said of any, provided he could get a penny by it.

This might, I said, have made any precaution needless—but you must know, as the parson had in a manner but just got down to his living, he dreaded the consequences of the least ill impression on his first entrance among his parishioners, which would have disabled him from doing them the good he wished—so that out of regard to his flock, more than the necessary care due to himself—he was resolved not to lie at the mercy of what resentment might vent, or malice lend an ear to.—

Accordingly the whole matter was rehearsed, from first to last, by the parson, in the manner I've told you, in the hearing of *John* the parish-clerk, and in the presence of *Trim*.

Trim had little to say for himself, except “that the parson had absolutely promised to befriend him and his wife in the affair to the utmost of his power; that the watch-coat was certainly in his power, and that he might still give it him if he pleased.”

To this the parson's reply was short, but strong, “That nothing was in his *power* to do, but what he could do *honestly*—that, in giving the coat to him and his wife, he should do a manifest wrong to the *next* sexton, the great watch-coat being the most comfortable part of the place—that he should moreover injure the right of his own successor, who would be just so much a worse patron, as the worth of the coat amounted to; and, in a word, he declared, that his whole intent in promising that coat, was charity to *Trim*, but *wrong* to no man—that was a reserve, he said, made in all cases of this kind: and he declared solemnly, *in verbo sacerdotis*, that this was his meaning, and was so understood by *Trim* himself.”

With the weight of this truth, and the great good sense and strong reason which accompanied all the parson said on the subject—poor *Trim* was driven to

his last shift—and begged he might be suffered to plead his right and title to the watch-coat, if not by *promise*, at least by *servitude*—it was well known how much he was entitled to it upon these scores: that he had blacked the parson's shoes without count, and greased his boots above fifty times—that he had run for eggs in the town upon all occasions—whetted the knives at all hours—caught his horse, and rubbed him down—that, for his wife, she had been ready upon all occasions to char for them; and neither he nor she, to the best of his remembrance, ever took a farthing, or any thing beyond a mug of ale.—To this account of his services, he begged leave to add those of his wishes, which, he said, had been equally great—he affirmed, and was ready, he said, to make it appear, by a number of witnesses, “he had drank his reverence's health a thousand times (by the bye he did not add out of the parson's own ale)—that he had not only drank his health, but wished it, and never came to the house but asked his man kindly how he did; that, in particular, about half a year ago, when his reverence cut his finger in paring an apple, he went half a mile * to ask a cunning woman what was good to staunch blood, and actually returned with a cobweb in his breeches pocket. Nay, says *Trim*, it was not a fortnight ago, when your reverence took that strong purge, that I went to the far end of the whole town, to borrow you a closestool—and came back, as the neighbours who flouted me will all bear witness, with the pan upon my head, and never thought it too much.” *Trim* concluded this pathetic remonstrance with saying “he hoped his reverence's heart would not suffer him to requite so many faithful

* “Long before any thing of my Patent was thought of, I not only most sincerely lamented the Archbishop's illness, but made it my business to enquire after every place and remedy that might help his Grace in his complaints.”—Extract of a Letter from Dr Topham, p. 26 of *Dr Fountayne's Answer*.

services by so unkind a return :—that if it was so, as he was the first, so he hoped he should be the last example of a man of his condition so treated.”—This plan of *Trim’s* defence, which *Trim* had put himself upon, could admit of no other reply than a general smile.—Upon the whole, let me inform you, that all that could be said *pro* and *con*, on both sides, being fairly heard, it was plain that *Trim* in every part of this affair had behaved very ill—and one thing, which was never expected to be known of him, happened in the course of this debate to come out against him, namely, that he had gone and told the parson, before he had ever set foot in his parish,* that *John* his parish-clerk—his church-wardens, and some of the heads of the parish, were a parcel of scoundrels.—Upon the upshot, *Trim* was kick’d out of doors, and told at his peril never to come there again.

At first, *Trim* huff’d and bounced most terribly—swore he would get a warrant—that nothing would serve him but he would call a bye-law, and tell the whole parish how the parson had misused him; but cooling of that, as fearing the parson might possibly bind him over to his good behaviour, and, for aught he knew, might send him to the house of correction, he lets the parson alone, and to revenge himself falls foul upon the clerk, who has no more to do in the quarrel than you or I—rips up the promise of the old—cast—pair of black—plush—breeches; and raises an uproar in the town about it, notwithstanding it had slept ten years—but all this, you must know, is looked upon in no other light but as an artful stroke of generalship in

* In Dr Fountayne’s Pamphlet, p. 18 and 19, Dr Topham is charged with having assured Archbishop Hutton, before he came into the Diocese, that the Dean and Chapter of York were a set of *strange people*, and that he would find it *very difficult*, if not *impossible*, to live upon good terms with them.

Trim to raise a dust, and cover himself under the disgraceful chastisement he has undergone.——

If your curiosity is not yet satisfied—I will now proceed to relate the *battle* of the *breeches* in the same exact manner I have done that of the watch-coat.——

Be it known then, that about ten years ago, when *John* was appointed parish-clerk of this church, this said *Trim* took no small pains to get into *John's* good graces, in order, as it afterwards appeared, to coax a promise out of him of a pair of breeches, which *John* had then by him, of black plush, not much the worse for wearing—*Trim* only begged, for God's sake, to have them bestowed upon him when *John* should think fit to cast them.——

Trim was one of those kind of men who loved a bit of finery in his heart, and would rather have a tatter'd rag of a better body's, than the best plain whole thing his wife could spin him.

John, who was naturally unsuspicious, made no more difficulty of promising the breeches than the parson had done in promising the great coat; and indeed with something less reserve—because the breeches were *John's own*, and he could give them, without wrong, to whom he thought fit.

It happened, I was going to say unluckily, but I should rather say most luckily, for *Trim*, for he was the only gainer by it, that a quarrel, about some six or eight weeks after this, broke out betwixt *the late parson* * of the parish and *John* the clerk. Somebody (and it was thought to be nobody but *Trim*) had put it into the parson's head, “that *John's* desk † in the church was at the least four inches higher than it should be—

* Archbishop Herring.

† This alludes to the right of appointing preachers for the vacant stalls, which Dr Fountayne, as Dean of York, claimed against the Archbishop.

that the thing gave offence, and was indecorous, inasmuch as it approached too near upon a level with the parson's desk itself."—This hardship the parson complained of loudly, and told *John*, one day after prayers, "he could bear it no longer—and would have it altered, and brought down as it should be." *John* made no other reply, but "that the desk was not of his raising :—that 'twas not one hair-breadth higher than he found it—and that as he found it so he would leave it.—In short, he would neither make an encroachment, neither would he suffer one."—The *late* parson might have his virtues, but the leading part of his character was not *humility*—so that *John's* stiffness in this point was not likely to reconcile matters.—This was *Trim's* harvest.

After a friendly hint to *John* to stand his ground, away hies *Trim* to make his market at the vicarage.—What passed there I will not say, intending not to be uncharitable ; so shall content myself with only guessing at it from the sudden change that appeared in *Trim's* dress for the better—for he had left his old ragged coat, hat, and wig, in the stable, and was come forth strutting across the church-yard, yclad in a good charitable cast coat, large hat, and wig, which the parson had just given him.—Ho ! ho ! hollo ! *John*, cries *Trim*, in an insolent bravo, as loud as ever he could bawl—see here, my lad, how fine I am.—The more shame for you, answered *John* seriously—Do you think, *Trim*, says he, such finery, gained by such services, becomes you, or can wear well ?—Fye upon it, *Trim*, I could not have expected this from you, considering what friendship you pretended, and how kind I have ever been to you—how many shillings, and sixpences, I have generously lent you in your distresses.—Nay, it was but the other day that I promised you these black plush breeches I have on.—Rot your breeches, quoth

Trim (for *Trim's* brain was half turn'd with his new finery), rot your breeches, says he—I would not take them up were they laid at my door—give them, and be d——d to you, to whom you like—I would have you to know I can have a better pair of the parson's any day in the week.—*John* told him plainly, as his word had once passed him, he had a spirit above taking advantage of his insolence in giving them away to another—but, to tell him his mind freely, he thought he had got so many favours of that kind, and was so likely to get many more for the same services, of the parson, that he had better give up the breeches, with good nature, to some one who would be more thankful for them.

Here *John* mentioned *Mark Slender** (who it seems the day before had asked *John* for them), not knowing they were under promise to *Trim*—"Come, *Trim*, says he, let poor *Mark* have them—you know he has not a pair to his a—, besides, you see he is just of my size, and they will fit to a T, whereas if I give 'em to you, look ye, they are not worth much, and besides, you could not get your backside into them, if you had them, without tearing them all to pieces."—Every tittle of this was most undoubtedly true, for *Trim*, you must know, by foul-feeding, and playing the goodfellow at the parson's, was grown somewhat gross about the lower parts, *if not higher*; so that, as all *John* said upon the occasion was fact, *Trim* with much ado, and after a hundred hums and hahs, at last, out of mere compassion to *Mark*, signs,† seals, and delivers up ALL RIGHT, INTEREST AND PRETENSIONS WHATSOEVER IN AND TO THE

* Dr Braithwaite.

† Extract of a letter from Dr Topham to Dr Fountayne: "As Dr Ward has proposed to resign the jurisdiction of Pickering and Pocklington to Dr Braithwaite, if you have not any other objection, I shall very readily give up what INTEREST arises to me in these jurisdictions from your friendship and regard." P. 5 of *Dr Fountayne's Answer to Dr Topham*.

SAID BREECHES, THEREBY BINDING HIS HEIRS, EXECUTORS, ADMINISTRATORS, AND ASSIGNS NEVER MORE TO CALL THE SAID CLAIM IN QUESTION.—All this renunciation was set forth, in an ample manner, to be in pure pity to *Mark's* nakedness—but the secret was, *Trim* had an eye to, and firmly expected, in his own mind, the great green pulpit-cloth,* and old velvet cushion, which were that very year to be taken down—which, by the bye, could he have wheedled *John* a second time, as he had hoped, would have made up the loss of the breeches seven-fold.

Now, you must know, this pulpit-cloth and cushion were not in *John's* gift, but in the church-wardens', † &c. However, as I said above that *John* was a leading man in the parish, *Trim* knew he could help him to 'em if he would—but *John* had got a surfeit of him—so, when the pulpit-cloth, &c., were taken down, they were immediately given (*John* having a great say in it) to *William Doe*, ‡ who understood very well what use to make of them.

As for the old breeches, poor *Mark* lived to wear them but a short time, and they got into the possession of *Lorry Slim*, § an unlucky wight, by whom they are still worn—in truth, as you will guess, they are very thin by this time.

But *Lorry* has a light heart, and what recommends them to him is this, that, as thin as they are, he knows that *Trim*, let him say what he will to the contrary, still envies the *possessor* of them, and with all his pride would be very glad to wear them after *him*.

Upon this footing have these affairs slept quietly for near ten years,—and would have slept for ever, but for

* The Commissaryship of Dean of York, and the Commissaryship of the Dean and Chapter of York.

† The members of the Chapter.

‡ Mr Stables.

§ Mr Sterne himself.

the unlucky kicking bout, which, as I said, has ripped this squabble up afresh; so that it was no longer ago than last week, that *Trim* met and * insulted *John* in the public town-way before a hundred people—tax'd him with the promise of the old cast pair of black breeches, notwithstanding *Trim's* solemn renunciation—twitted him with the pulpit-cloth and velvet cushion—as good as told him he was ignorant of the common duties of his clerkship; adding, very insolently, that he knew not so much as to give out a common psalm in tune.

John contented himself by giving a plain answer to every article that *Trim* had laid to his charge, and appealed to his neighbours who remembered the whole affair—and, as he knew there was never any thing to be got by wrestling with a chimney-sweeper, he was going to take his leave of *Trim* for ever. But hold—the mob by this time had got round them, and their high mightinesses insisted upon having *Trim* tried upon the spot.—

Trim was accordingly tried, and after a full hearing, was convicted a second time, and handled more roughly by one or more of them than even at the parson's.—

Trim, says one, are you not ashamed of yourself to make all this rout and disturbance in the town, and set neighbours together by the ears, about an old—worn-out—pair of cast—breeches not worth half a crown? Is there a cast coat, or a place in the whole town, that will bring you in a shilling, but what you have snapped up like a greedy hound as you are?

In the first place, are you not sexton and dog-whipper, † worth three pounds a year? Then you

* At the Sessions dinner, where Dr Topham charged Dr Fountayne with the breach of his promise, in giving the Commissaryship of Pocklington and Pickering to another person.

† “In the first place, would any one imagine that Dr Topham, who was now Master of the Faculties—Commissary to the Arch-

begged the church-wardens to let your wife have the washing and darning of the church-linen, which brings you in thirteen shillings and four-pence; then you have six shillings and eight-pence for oiling and winding up the clock, both paid you at Easter—the pounder's place, which is worth forty shillings a year, you have got that too—you are the bailiff, which the late parson got you, which brings you in forty shillings more.

Besides all this, you have six pounds a year paid you quarterly for being mole-catcher to the parish. Aye, says the luckless wight abovementioned (who was standing close by him with the plush breeches on) “you are not only mole-catcher, *Trim*, but you catch *STRAY CONIES* too in the *dark*, and you pretend a licence for it, which, I trow, will be looked into at the next quarter sessions.” I maintain it, I have a licence, says *Trim*, blushing as red as scarlet—I have a licence, and, as I farm a warren in the next parish, I will catch conies every hour in the night. *You catch conies!* says a toothless old woman just passing by.

This set the mob a-laughing, and sent every man home in perfect good humour, except *Trim*, who waddled very slowly off with that kind of inflexible gravity only to be equalled by one animal in the creation, and surpassed by none.

I am, Sir,

Yours, &c. &c.

bishop of York—Official to the Archdeacon of York—Official to the Archdeacon of the East Riding—Official to the Archdeacon of Cleveland—Official to the peculiar jurisdiction of Howdenshire—Official to the Precentor—Official to the Chancellor of the Church of York—and Official to several of the Prebendaries thereof, could accept of so poor an addition as a Commissaryship of five guineas per annum?” P. 8 of *Dr Fountayne's Answer to Dr Topham*.

POSTSCRIPT.

I HAVE broke open my letter to inform you, that I missed the opportunity of sending it by the messenger, who I expected would have called upon me in his return thro' this village to York ; so it has lain a week or ten days by me—I am not sorry for the disappointment, because something has since happened in continuation of this affair, which I am thereby enabled to transmit to you all under one trouble.

When I finished the above account, I thought (as did every soul in the parish) *Trim* had met with so thorough a rebuff from *John* the parish-clerk, and the town's-folks, who all took against him, that *Trim* would be glad to be quiet, and let the matter rest.

But, it seems, it is not half an hour ago since *Trim* * sallied forth again, and, having borrowed a sow-gelder's horn, with hard blowing he got the whole town round him, and endeavoured to raise a disturbance, and fight the whole battle over again—alleged that he had been used in the last fray worse than a dog, not by *John* the parish-clerk, for I should not, quoth *Trim*, have valued him a rush single-hands—but all the town sided with him, and twelve men in *buckram* † set upon me, all at once, and kept me in play at sword's point for three hours together.

Besides, quoth *Trim*, there were two misbegotten knaves in *Kendal-green*, who lay all the while in ambush in *John's* own house, and they all sixteen came upon my back, and let drive at me all together—a plague, says *Trim*, of all cowards.

* Alluding to Dr Topham's Reply to Dr Fountayne's Answer.

† In Dr Topham's Reply he asserts, that Dr Fountayne's Answer was *the child and offspring of many parents*, p. 1.

Trim repeated his story above a dozen times, which made some of the neighbours pity him, thinking the poor fellow crack-brain'd, and that he actually believed what he said.

After this *Trim* dropped the affair of the breeches, and began a fresh dispute about the reading desk, which I told you had occasioned some small dispute between the *late* parson and *John* some years ago.—This reading desk, as you will observe, was but an episode wove into the main story by the bye, for the main affair was *the battle of the breeches and the great coat*.

However, *Trim* being at last driven out of these two citadels—he has seized hold, in his retreat, of this reading desk, with a view, as it seems, to take shelter behind it.

I cannot say but the man has fought it out obstinately enough, and, had his cause been good, I should have really pitied him. For, when he was driven out of the *great watch-coat*, you see he did not run away; no—he retreated behind the breeches, and when he could make nothing of it behind the breeches, he got behind the reading desk. To what other hold *Trim* will next retreat, the politicians of this village are not agreed. Some think his next move will be towards the rear of the parson's boot; but as it is thought he cannot make a long stand there, others are of opinion, that *Trim* will once more in his life get hold of the parson's horse, and charge upon him, or perhaps behind him: but as the horse is not easy to be caught, the more general opinion is, that, when he is driven out of the reading desk, he will make his last retreat in such a manner, as, if possible, to gain the *closestool*, and defend himself behind it to the very last drop.

If *Trim* should make this movement, by my advice he should be left, besides his citadel, in full possession of the field of battle, where 'tis certain he will keep

every body a league off, and may hop by himself till he is weary. Besides, as *Trim* seems bent upon *purging* himself, and may have abundance of foul humours to work off, I think he cannot be better placed.

But this is all matter of speculation—Let me carry you back to matter of fact, and tell you what kind of stand *Trim* has actually made behind the said desk: “Neighbours and townsmen all, I will be sworn before my Lord Mayor, that *John* and his nineteen men in *buckram* have abused me worse than a dog, for they told you that I play’d fast and go loose with the *late* parson and him in that old dispute of theirs about the *reading desk*, and that I made matters worse between them, and not better.”

Of this charge *Trim* declared he was as innocent as the child that was unborn—that he would be book-sworn he had no hand in it.

He produced a strong witness, and moreover insinuated, that *John* himself, instead of being angry for what he had done in it, had actually thanked him—Aye, *Trim*, says the wight in the plush breeches, but that was, *Trim*, the day before *John* found thee out. Besides, *Trim*, there is nothing in that, for the very year that you was made town’s-pounder, thou knowest well that I both thanked thee myself, and moreover gave thee a good warm supper for turning *John Lund*’s cows and horses out of my hard corn close, which if thou hadst not done (as thou toldst me), I should have lost my whole crop; whereas *John Lund* and *Thomas Patt*, who are both here to testify, and are both willing to take their oaths on’t, that thou thyself wast the very man who set the gate open—and after all, it was not thee, *Trim*, ’twas the blacksmith’s poor lad who turned them out—so that a man may be thanked and rewarded too for a good turn which he never did, nor ever did intend.

Trim could not sustain this unexpected stroke—so *Trim* marched off the field without colours flying, or his horn sounding, or any other ensigns of honour whatever.—Whether after this *Trim* intends to rally a second time—or whether he may not take it into his head to claim the victory—none but *Trim* himself can inform you.

However, the general opinion upon the whole is this, that, in three several pitch'd battles, *Trim* has been so *trimm'd* as never disastrous hero was *trimm'd* before.

THE END.

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